

**FRONTIERS, OCEANS AND COASTAL CULTURES:  
A PRELIMINARY RECONNAISSANCE**

by

David R. Jones

A Thesis Submitted to Saint Mary's University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Atlantic Canada Studies

December, 2007, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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**ABSTRACT****FRONTIERS, OCEANS AND COASTAL CULTURES:****A PRELIMINARY RECONNAISSANCE**

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**Abstract:** Part I of this study examines the practical and symbolic connotations according the term “frontier” over time. Opening with its limited military-territorial usage in colonial North America, I consider this within the context of the theories of Frederick Jackson Turner, the later impact of those theories, and the redefinitions proposed by his later critics and defenders. In this process a fortified zone of cross-border conflict became a leading edge of agricultural settlement and, later still, an often distant border region. Within this last, pioneer-frontiersmen are usually prominent. Meanwhile the material, intellectual, spiritual and other cultural values of an established centre or metropolis are first asserted in often primitive and hostile conditions, only to later rebound to interact with the home metropolis. In Part II I investigate the extent to which the Turner and post-Turner concepts are applicable to the activities carried out on the oceans that cover some 70 percent of Earth’s surface. Apart from the territorial frontier nature of many coastlines, I propose there is a more general “Oceanic Frontier” on which mariner-frontiersmen are the equivalents of their traditional counterparts on land. This Oceanic Frontier comprise three sub-frontiers: the coastline on land; the maritime (or adjacent) coastal waters; and the distant high seas or “oceanic” frontier per se. All exist in a symbiotic relationship that has a unique impact on the mariner-frontiersmen who exploit them, as well as on the coastal dwellers who support them. Finally, I suggest this results in essential cultural differences between inhabitants of such maritime frontiers and those of the traditionally agricultural, often initially peasant, cultures of the continental interiors.

December 12, 2007



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in the maritime aspect of this study springs from the traditions of the seafaring Yarmouth family of my mother, Mary Allen Jones, as well as my own fascination with the Halifax waterfront of my youth. This has merged with a fascination in the history of Atlantic Canada which I inherited from my father, Dr. Robert O. Jones; from his friend Alexander H. Leighton, and from our summer neighbour in Bedford, John Bartlet Brebner, who for many years taught summer school in Halifax. More recently and directly, I am grateful to John G. Reid for his knowledge, friendship and above all else, for his patience; to Harry Thurston for his poetry and parallel interest in my topic; to my friend Jane Crittenden of Pensacola, Florida, for her constant, long-distance encouragement; to Dr. Ralph Stuart of Acadia University for our many fruitful conversations on Scottish history and the diaspora; and to Dr. Boris Raymond and numerous other friends who have listened to the endless musings that eventually became distilled in what follows. Needless to say, I alone am responsible for any errors and all the remaining problems that remain.

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**INTRODUCTION**  
**THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY**

I admit it, perhaps only a poet  
could love the Atlantic's sombre palette:  
shale grey, bilge green, milt blue; the blood red  
of sky in the sailor's rhyme, memorizing  
the horizon's warning of delight.  
The constant companionship of fog,  
a sibling presence, a kind of tide clock,  
mantra of sea breath always billowing  
from the harbour's mouth; the diaphone,  
mythic half-human, half-animal,  
a Minotaur tethered at land's end,  
bellowing day and night. The gull's  
perfect flight, precise as origami,  
floating up from the fish-mongering docks.  
The thrum of marine diesel, tap of slant-six  
salvaged from some rust-eaten wreck. The salt.  
The smell of the sea shore -- Georges  
or Grand Banks, Banquereau, even Sable's sands  
shuffling beneath our feet on Water Street.

--- Harry Thurston, "Atlantic Elegy, 1: The Salt," in If Men Lived on Earth  
(Wolfville, NS: Gaspereau Press; 2000), p. 131.

In 1851 John Babsone Lane Soule issued the call “Go West, young man” in the Express of Terre Haute, Indiana. Probably unwittingly, he gave voice to the spirit of his times. His cry was taken up and expanded by the journalist Horace Greeley who, in an editorial in The New York Tribune, advised “Go west, young man, and grow up with the country.”<sup>1</sup> With this, he encouraged the great “Westward Movement” which had begun when settlers pushed across the Appalachians into the Ohio in the 1770s-1780s, and which gave birth to the celebrated and fabled Western frontier of popular literature, comic books, musicals, movies and television.<sup>2</sup>

For Nova Scotians like myself and the poet quoted above, the lure of the West was balanced by the call of the ever-present ocean. I was raised in a family steeped in tales of tall-ship voyages from Yarmouth to China, I have always felt instinctively drawn to sea. Although no poet, I too checked the sunset to forecast the morrow’s likely weather, slept on foggy nights with the sound of the Minotaur’s bellow in my ears, tasted the salt in the air, and filled my nostrils with the smell of fish when the wind blew from the east, or of that of raw rubber and diesel oil while I roamed the docks with friends on a warm June night. My grandmother’s house was packed with brass and porcelain brought by her family’s captains from China. My aged uncle’s last girlfriend had rounded the Horn (with her parents and older sister) at age twelve, and laughingly recalled how angry her

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1

Quoted in John Bartlett, Familiar Quotations, 12<sup>th</sup> rev. ed., ed. Christopher Morley and Louella D. Everett, (Boston, Little, Brown; 1951), p. 505, and footnote 1.

2

The development of this “frontier” concept, and its impact on American history and culture, is examined further in chapters I-III below.

skipper-father became when they revealed their youthful ankles while climbing in the rigging. But that era is past and like other Maritimers, members of our family later began emigrating south to the “Boston States,” or west to “Upper Canada” or “On-tar-ar-io.” As for the harbour front of my youth, the arched gates to the wharfs are gone, and while the majority of docks have given way to the ugly fences and angular cranes of the container ports. So to are most of the working tugs, now replaced by the yachts of the privileged while the erstwhile wharfs have become boardwalks for tourists seeking snacks, drinks or souvenirs, along which those from the tour liners trek to deposit their cash in the Casino. Only the occasional visits by “the Tall Ships,” along with a museum of immigration at Pier 21, continue to remind us of a different time, less than a half-century gone.

This is what it is to be a “World Class” port. Now most of my fellow residents in Atlantic Canada have finally turned from the sea – the cod are gone and other species are following in their wake – and many are at last heeding the cry “Go West.” Now this has become the de facto motto of the region’s unemployed young men and women who hope for better lives by “going down the road” to “Taranta” (Toronto), or still farther west to Alberta. Yet in my Grandmother’s day, the cry for coastal and even inland residents of Nova Scotian and New England – the fishermen, whalers and crews of clippers – might well have been “Look East, young man. To the sea!” For like land frontiers, the sea and ocean have long offered opportunities for adventures and enrichment, as well as risks of disaster and causes for uncertainty.

These last characteristics are those especially feared by the majority of “land-lubbers”

of the long largely agricultural interior. Their traditional distaste for and suspicion of the ocean has been shared by millions of peasants everywhere throughout the ages. In about 800 BC the Greek writer Hesiod warned his fellows that it “is dreadful to die at sea,” and counselled his brother not to “put all your means into ship cargoes; leave the major part on shore....”<sup>3</sup> A Provencal peasant proverb is even more absolute: “A man of Provence turns his back on the sea.”<sup>4</sup> As a result, a deep divide has often separated the seafarer from the landsman, a gulf of incomprehension well expressed in the Scottish Gaelic proverb in verse that translates as: “The man of the village has no idea/How the man of the sea exists.”<sup>5</sup>

This division between coastal dwellers who live by exploiting the seas and oceans, on the one hand, and those who live in the interior and who, until relatively recently, lived predominantly from working the land as peasants or small freehold farmers, on the other, is a central theme in Part II below. But first another issue also deserves attention: the nature of a frontier, a term closely associated with Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) and his famous essay of 1893. Briefly, he saw the “frontier” as “the hither edge of free land.” More significantly, it was the moving line between settled regions and a

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3

Translation from Hesiod, Work and Days in Richard Garnett, et al., The Book of Literature: A Comprehensive Anthology, 34 vols. (New York: The Grolier Society; 1922, 1923), 3, p. 102.

4

Personal communication from Louisa Jones-Dupont, Avignon, 5 June 2006.

5

Quoted in Gaelic and in translation in Adam Nicolson, Sea Room: An Island Life in the Hebrides (New York: North Point Press; 2001), pp. 15-16.

virtually unpopulated wilderness or, given the ethnocentric mentality of his day, that between Anglo-American civilization and Amerindian savagery. Reflecting the popular consensus of his day, Turner argued that the difficulties involved in the process of settlement had created a freedom-loving, independently-minded population of frontiersmen (and frontiers-women) who had sought better lives and, in the process, became uniquely American.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps so, but until the latter decades of last century many coastal youths in Nova Scotia and the rest of Maritime Canada, like their fellows along the eastern seaboard of the still new American Republic, regarded the sea as their natural frontier. By the 1840s, however, the United States faced a host of domestic troubles. Along with wide-spread political corruption, the republic's socio-economic structure was becoming increasingly stratified. At the same time, its unity was threatened by the slavery debates and sectional strife that a decade later exploded outright in the Civil War. Against this background, the seemingly open and vast spaces of "the West," buttressed by lure of gold in California, seemed to offered many disillusioned Americans an alternative to lives of desperate wage-slavery in the East's expanding network of crowded industrial cities, or to the drudgery and boredom of working as a hired farm hand.<sup>7</sup> Not surprisingly, there

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Turner first presented his thesis in his essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," republished in F.J. Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt; 1920, 1953; republished: Mineola, NY: Dover Publications; 1996), pp. 1-38. This first appeared in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893 (Washington: US GPO; 1894), 199-227, after Turner had read his paper at the Association's annual meeting in Chicago in 1893.

7

There are numerous accounts of this era f the history of the United States, the most

were many “aspiring young men” ready to heed Greeley’s advice that if “you have no family or friends to aid you, and no prospect opened to you there, turn your face to the great West, and there build up a home and fortune .”<sup>8</sup>

Thereafter the stream of emigration that had begun during the 1760s-1790s as a trickle across the Appalachians, swelled into a torrent that surged across the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. Then, after a brief breathing pause, the migrants flooded the Great Plains all the way to the Rocky Mountains to unite with earlier American migrants on West or Pacific Coast. As a result, Turner argues, by mid-century the “true point of view in the history of this nation” was no longer the Atlantic coast but, rather, “the Great West.”<sup>9</sup> Although a de facto settlement “frontier” long predated the Soule-Greeley exhortations, by 1870 this last term was increasingly becoming identified in the American public’s consciousness almost exclusively with the “Westward Movement” of

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recent being Walter A. McDougall, Throes of Democracy: The American Civil War Era, 1829-1877 (New York: HarperCollins; 2008). As for the specific impact of the discovery of gold in California on American society, this is discussed at length in H.W. Brands, The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream (New York: Doubleday; 2002).

8

Horace Greeley, To Aspiring Young Men, in James Parton, Life of Horace Greeley (1855), p. 414, quoted in J. Bartlett, Familiar Quotations, p. 479. For “the state of the nation” at this time, see Page Smith, A Peoples’s History of the Ante-Bellum Years, IV: The Nation Comes of Age (New York: Penguin Books; 1981), and Sean Wilentz, The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln (New York: W.W. Norton; 2005), section III.

9

F.J. Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” p. 3



pioneers.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, after the end of the Civil War in 1865, a resumption of the task of fulfilling the imperatives of “Manifest Destiny,”<sup>11</sup> and of pushing the border of the United States to the shores of the Pacific, gave a recently divided nation a common cause. Be it mere imperialist expansion or the equally violent process of “nation-building,” before the century’s end this variegated and uneven migration had become transformed into a common national myth.<sup>12</sup> As such it survives to this day in the form

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10

Despite the popular equation of the “frontier” with the “West,” many scholars integrate this last phase of continental expansion into the overall American narrative, beginning at Jamestown and Plymouth. See, for example, R.V. Coleman, The First Frontier: A History of How America Began (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons; 1948), and Kent L. Steckmesser, The Westward Movement: A Short History (New York: McGraw-Hill; 1969). The use of “frontier” in this manner is discussed in greater detail in chapters II-III below.

11

Journalist John O’Sullivan usually is credited with coining this phrase when defending the United States’ rights regarding Oregon, in The United States Magazine and Democratic Review issue for July 1845, on the grounds that “our manifest destiny [is] to overspread and possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federated self-government;” quoted in Ray Allen Billington, ed., Story of the Great American West (Pleasantville, NY, and Montreal, PQ: Reader’s Digest; 1977), p. 164, and Walter R. Borneman, Polk: The Man Who Transformed the Presidency and America (New York: Random House; 2008), pp. 164-165. Thereafter, the idea gained greater currency in connection with the Mexican War of 1846, and the phrase came to signify faith in the idea “that God had ordained Anglo-European expansion across the continent,” under the aegis of the United States; Page Stegner, Winning the Wild West: The Epic Saga of the American Frontier, 1800-1899 (New York: The Free Press; 2002), p. 120-121. Also see K.L. Steckmesser, The Westward Movement, pp. 260-275, and S. Wilentz, Rise of American Democracy, pp. 562-605. Others suggest that the term was coined by the political journalist Jane Storm, but all agree that regardless of its origin, the phrase captured the nationalist mood of the day; see, for example, Daniel Walker Howe, What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848 (Oxford and New York: Oxford University; 2007), pp. 702-708.

12

The distinction between imperial expansion and “nation-building” was made recently

of the tales and images of mountain men, cavalrymen, pioneers, cowboys, bandits, Indians, schoolmarms, and all the others who inhabit popular literature and the Hollywood Westerns.<sup>13</sup>

Equally important, the westward movement also became integrated into American high culture<sup>14</sup> and, after 1893, thanks to the above-mentioned essay of Turner, into the

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made by Ivan Eland. "The westward expansion," he argues, "should be labeled as nation-building, not empire-building...." He then points out that "nation-building can be more brutal than the quest for empire [where] conquered populations are left intact and dominated, at least partially, using local elites. They often keep their own language and laws." But with nation-building, "foreign populations are either 'integrated' with conquering peoples through forced assimilation, or annihilated or driven from their land ... to make room for colonies of conquerors." As well, they are often "forced to speak the conquerors' languages and obey their laws;" Ivan Eland, The Empire Has No Clothes: U.S. Foreign Policy Exposed (Oakland, CA: The Independent Institute; 2004), pp. 3-4.

<sup>13</sup>

3-4.K.L. Steckmesser, The Westward Movement, p. 400, considers the "myth or fable" of the westward movement to be "the greatest of our [i.e., American] national myths." For this and other aspects of popular Western culture see Stephen Tatum, Inventing Billy the Kid: Visions of the Outlaw in America, 1881-1981 (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico; 1982); Christine Bold, Selling the Wild West: Popular Western Literature, 1860-1960 (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana; 1987); Edward Buscombe, ed., The BFI Companion to the Western [Films] (New York: Atheneum; 1988); Richard W. Slatta, The Cowboy Encyclopedia (New York: W.W. Norton; 1996); and David Hamilton Murdoch, The American West: The Invention of a Myth (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press; 1999).

<sup>14</sup>

Apart from James Fenimore Cooper's "Leatherstocking" series of novels, which began publication with The Pioneers in 1823, and Washington Irving's The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, USA (1837), see the images of the West found in numerous passages in Walt Whitman's Song of Myself (1881), Stephan Vincent Benet's epic Western Star (1943), and John G. Neihardt's three part cycle (1915-1941), published together as The Mountain Men (1948). Musically, the West entered the world of opera with the Italian Giacomo Puccini's The Girl of the Golden West (1911), which finally was rivaled by Douglas Moore's The Ballad of Baby Doe (1956). In the interim, it also provided a locale for Richard Rogers' and Oscar Hammerstein's Oklahoma! (1943) and Alan Jay Lerner's Frederick Loewe's Paint Your Wagon (1951), as well as a range of other works that include Virgil Thomson's The Plow that Broke the Plains (1936) and

writing of American history and the social sciences. Decades of discussion, criticism and controversy ensued and as a consequence, Turner's concept of the "frontier" frequently was redefined and modified.<sup>15</sup> During this process Turner's student Herbert Eugene Bolton (1870-1953) made what was perhaps the most significant contribution when, as a result of his study of the northern edge of Spain's American Empire from Florida to California, he advanced the concept of the "borderland." This he defined as a zone within which advancing and competitive frontiers meet head-on, a situation which then frequently leads to conflict.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, and quite apart from the southwest and western United States, both these concepts – "frontier" and "borderland" – have been applied to a wide range of times and places. Other locales have included the circumpolar Arctic, the deserts, pampas and jungles of Latin American, the savannahs of South Africa, the vast steppes of Eurasia, and the rice-growing regions along China's

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Aaron Copeland's ballets Billy the Kid (1938) and Rodeo (1942).

<sup>15</sup>

For Turner's subsequent development of his thesis, and the views of his disciples and opponents, see Ray Allen Billington, ed., The Frontier Thesis: Valid interpretation of American History? (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston; 1966), and that same author's pamphlet, The American Frontier, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: American Historical Association; 1965), which includes references to the concept's application elsewhere.

<sup>16</sup>

On Bolton see George Peter Hammond, "In Memoriam: Herbert Eugene Bolton, 1870-1953," The Americas, 9 (April 1953), pp. 391-398; Jerome Vincent Jacobsen, "Herbert E. Bolton," Mid-America: An Historical Review, 35 (April 1953), 75-80, and David J. Weber "Turner, the Boltonians, and Spanish Borderlands," in his Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest: Essays (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico; 1988), pp. 33-54.

southern border, to name but a few.<sup>17</sup> Turner and Bolton aside, some of their followers took on the task of adjusting the definitions of "frontier," "borderland" and related terms in ways that critics found to be so "particularist" and narrowly exclusive as to preclude efforts at establishing a comparative perspective. Still other definitions were said to suffer from the opposite flaw: they were so generally-derived or so inclusive as to be of no real use to the students of particular historical-geographical regions.

This last difficulty is highlighted by Thomas Bender's review of Robert Hine's study Community on the American Frontier. "Neither community nor frontier is precisely defined," Bender complains, "hence any causal statements are problematic." So despite the other merits of Hine's book, he that believes it fails to explain the role of the frontier in either promoting or hindering settlement and the growth of community.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, although the historiographic debates over Turner's theory have waxed and waned over the past century, consensus has proven to be elusive. For example, by the mid-1970s, scholars seeking to promote a program of comparative "frontier studies" complained that despite "the implicit assumption" that Turner's frontier theories offered to provide

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And this excludes such metaphorical uses of the term as the anthropologist W. Arens' On the Frontier of Change (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan; 1979); K.T. Jackson's The Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbization of the United States (New York: Oxford University; 1985); or Murray Melbin's Night as Frontier: Colonizing the World after Dark (New York: Free Press; 1987).

18

Thomas Bender's review of Robert V. Hine, Community on the American Frontier: Separate but Not Alone (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 1980), in American Historical Review, 86 (December 1981), No. 5, p. 1142. Hine's own later attempts to answer such criticisms and other problems are evident in Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, Frontiers: A Short History of the American West (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 2007), especially pp. 1-6, 133-162, 191-225.

them with “a sufficient theoretical base,” this often proved “to be unproductive” when applied “to other frontiers.” One reason for this, they continue, is because it “is difficult to say what the Turner thesis is, or was.” This was because his essay of 1893-1894, “usually assumed to be the manifesto of frontier historiography, did not really state a hypothesis” apart from his emphasis on the function of free land.<sup>19</sup>

Interest in “frontier theory” again lapsed somewhat from the early 1980s until the 1990s. Then discussions of “frontiers” and their associated “borderlands” again revived to preoccupy many historians and social scientists, and to once again leave Turner’s image battered and rather tarnished.<sup>20</sup> Again many of the old problems remained unresolved, although they now often assumed new forms and significance in the “post-modernist” environment of the day. Whereas the concepts of Turner and Bolton were once largely historical-geographical and linguistic-cultural in nature, they now are applied to a range of other intellectual issues. These include questions of gender and professional definition, class identity and relationships, psychological attitudes, and so on. The result has been the creation of a multitude of variegated frontiers and diversified borderlands which, in turn, now provide the contested border terrains for a range of scholarly and ideological-political pursuits and battles. Consequently, as a recent debate

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<sup>19</sup>

David Harry Miller and Jerome O. Steffen, eds., The Frontier: Comparative Studies, v.1 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 1977), “Introduction,” p. 6.

<sup>20</sup>

In part, of course, this renewed interest reflected the centennial of Turner’s presentation of his first frontier paper; see, for example, “A Centennial Symposium on the Significance of Frederick Jackson Turner,” Journal of the Early Republic, 13 (1993), 133-249.

in the American Historical Review<sup>21</sup> suggests, a number of factors still undermine the real utility of employing these terms.

In light of these scholarly melees, one might question whether or not the terms "frontier" and "borderland" retain any of whatever analytical significance they once possessed. Rather, they often appear to have become mere polemical and political clichés used to mask conceptual confusion rather than promote analytical clarity. The same seems equally true of many new post-modernist concepts, such as that of "hybridity." Now used by some literary theorists and followers of cultural studies to describe people existing in multi-racial and multicultural milieus, it clearly is the condition of many we once simply designated as "borderlanders" or "borderers" and, in my view, therefore adds little to our understanding of the latter's historical roles throughout recorded history, despite loud pronouncements about this concept's alleged theoretical and political-ideological niceties.<sup>22</sup>

This account of the problems of definition, daunting as they may appear, should still not preclude a search for greater terminological clarity and precision. For the original concepts of Turner and Bolton may well retain value if used judiciously in their initial and more limited manner. Rather than seeking single and succinct definitions, Part I (the

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See Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation States, and the Peoples In Between in North American History," American Historical Review, 104 (June 1999), No. 3, 815-841. The ensuing debate appeared in Ibid. (October 1999), No. 4, 1222-1239.

22

On "hybridity" see, for example, May Joseph and Jennifer Natalya Fink, eds., Performing Hybridity (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota; 1999).

first three chapters) below will review in detail the origins of Anglo-America's first real, European-style frontier, the development of the larger colonial and American military and settlement "frontiers," and then briefly discuss above-mentioned debates. In identifying characteristics that seem typical of a range of recognized frontiers and borderlands over time, and of the often near legendary "frontiersmen" who lived on them, I will confine myself to the historical-geographical and cultural meanings of these terms, and ignore the multitude of metaphorical uses to which they have been subjected. I should add, however, that despite my doubts about attempts to "deconstruct" past world-views, attitudes and behaviour within the bounds of contemporary "post-modern" social values and ideologies, I fully accept the value of understanding them within their own contexts. As Donna Merwick's study of Albany under the Dutch and English demonstrates, the different intellectual preconceptions of rival colonizing powers can sometimes lead to very different conceptions of the geography of the same colonial frontier or border zone, if not indeed to the meaning once intended by those who in the past used the term itself.<sup>23</sup>

I conclude Part I by suggesting that the range of definitions, or rather characteristics, of "frontiers" discussed may prove to have some broader, if not necessarily universal value. For this reason they may be suggestive to other students of a variety of regions and realms, those of the maritime world include. In Part II, therefore, I investigate the "frontier" concept's applicability to the watery realm of our planet's seas and oceans in

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<sup>23</sup>

Donna Merwick, Possessing Albany, 1630-1710: The Dutch and English Experience (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1990).

general, and suggest some implications for studies of the Atlantic Ocean in particular. In so doing, I recognize that this goal may at first sight appear quixotic. After all, if one characteristic is constant in the works of Turner, Bolton and their disciples, it is that their frontiers and borderlands are firmly anchored on dry land. Since scattered islands aside, it is impossible to possess, settle or otherwise “occupy” an ocean, it thus may well seem absurd to apply the concept of a “frontier” to maritime and oceanic milieus. If, however, we regard this supposed universal terrestrial property as only one of a cluster of attributes, and focus instead on the other varied social-economic and cultural characteristics assigned to many frontiers and their associated frontiersmen, the situation becomes somewhat different.

Consider, for instance, the position adopted by some maritime historians. “America’s first frontier was not the West,” insists Nathaniel Philbrick, “it was the sea.”<sup>24</sup> In his case the “frontier” is explicitly a practical realm of exploration, and implicitly an arena offering mariners similar opportunities for fulfilling their material aspirations as did the West to Soule’s and Greeley’s aspiring pioneers. When dealing with Europe rather than North America, others also apply the term in a way that combines a more traditional, pre-Turner concept with more recent interpretations. Thus a recent historian of the Black Sea notes its reputation as “a timeless frontier at the meeting place of different civilizational zones ... or perhaps as part of a periphery of the

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Nathaniel Philbrick, Sea of Glory. America's Voyage of Discovery: The U.S. Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842 (New York: Viking; 2003), p. xvi..



imagination....”<sup>25</sup> But significantly, only the second of these maritime historians feels it necessary to explain his use of “frontier,” and then only briefly. Furthermore, the context of their remarks makes clear that neither author is using the term in a metaphorical sense, and that both clearly assume that we understand their meanings and why, without further serious comment, the term “frontier” applies to their respective areas of maritime interest. Nonetheless, this may be less obvious to those accustomed to land-focused “frontier” studies, be they Americans or otherwise. For while many employ the traditional territorial-boundary definition of “frontier” in maritime environments, only a handful of scholars – like those just cited – attempt to apply Turner’s “frontier theory,” or any of the other, equally land-based theories provoked by his thesis, to oceanic contexts.

Despite the examples just mentioned, I believe that any such application either the term or theory requires a full and detailed examination of the assumptions and definitions involved. Consequently, the first two chapters below outline the traditional uses of the term “frontier” before Turner, both in Europe and North America, the nature of his synthesis, and the transformation in historical thought in the United States brought by his famous essay, while the third considers the range of responses and counter-theories spawned during the debates he provoked. Thus armed, we are ready to proceed

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Charles King, The Black Sea: A History (Oxford: Oxford University; 2004), p. 9. His brief theoretical comments, which warn against this timeless approach to the Black Sea frontier, are dealt with in chapter V below. The “frontier” nature of this region is further argued in William H. McNeill, Europe’s Steppe Frontier, 1500-1800 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago; 1964).

with an investigation of their application to another realm – that of the global Ocean whose waters cover over two thirds of our planet. This is the subject of Part Two of this study, which opens (chapter four) by briefly introducing the environments faced by those seeking to cross or exploit any of presumptive maritime frontiers presented by our traditional “Seven Seas.”<sup>26</sup> Yet while we divide up this watery realm in this or a similar manner, we must always remember that despite our custom of seeing the Earth’s salt waters as a series of separate seas and oceans, they are in fact so interconnected as to form one, vast unified world of water that in many ways resembles the Oceanus of the ancient Greeks.<sup>27</sup> The universal aspects of this vast expanse, which is bound together by a single circulatory system, are obvious to the oceanic frontiersman who ply their trade on its surface. Even so, within this whole there still do exist discrete oceanic regions that are defined by their geographic position, varying local currents, winds and climates, coastal environments, histories, and so on,. For the sake of convenience, it therefore often makes sense to separate them when examining their differing contributions to world history as we know it.

This is especially the case with the Atlantic Ocean. However defined, it has served historically as the primary portal by which Western Europeans reach the other

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The changing meaning of the term “Seven Seas” is discussed in Peter Freuchen with David Loth, Peter Freuchen’s Book of the Seven Seas (New York: Julian Messner; 1957), pp. 32-43, and in chapter IV below.

<sup>27</sup>

On the natural unity of the ocean world see Ellen J. Prager with Sylvia A. Earle, The Oceans (New York: McGraw-Hill; 2000), pp. ix-xix, and on the development of the Greek concept of “Oceanus,” Robert H. Fuson, Legendary Islands of the Ocean Sea (Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press; 1995), pp. 3-19.

components of Oceanus, and so become integrated with the rest of the globe. Our traditional and persistent “medicentric”<sup>28</sup> view is that within Europe itself, the northwest and Atlantic rim long existed as a mere frontier periphery of the more civilized, classical Mediterranean metropolis. Thanks to this, until recently most histories of the Atlantic commonly begin the story with the speculations of the Greeks and Romans; hold that its coastal peoples only began to emerge on the world stage at the time of the Roman conquest of Gaul and Britain; and conclude that thereafter, although the northwest Atlantic “rim” did display some initiative in the Middle Ages, this ocean’s secondary and “frontier” status was transcended only thanks to the European voyages of exploration and expansion carried out after the 1420s.<sup>29</sup> Yet despite our long fascination

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I use this term to refer to the generally accepted historiographic tradition that sees “Western civilization” as arising in the Near East and Eastern Mediterranean, then being refined by Greece, later transmitted by Rome to the rest of Europe, and finally shared with the remainder of a sometimes ungrateful world through Europe’s global expansion after 1492-1500. Typical examples of this historiographic genre are David Attenborough, The First Eden: The Mediterranean World and Man (Boston: Little, Brown; 1987); Michael Grant, The Ancient Mediterranean (New York: History Book Club; 2002); Robin W. Winks and Susan P. Mattern-Parkes, The Ancient Mediterranean World: From the Stone Age to A.D. 600 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University; 2004); Robert D. Ballard, with Toni Eugene, Mystery of the Ancient Seafarers: Early Maritime Civilizations, intro. Spencer Wells (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society; 2004); and most recently, Michael Streeter, The Mediterranean Cradle of European Culture (New York: New Holland Publishers; 2006).

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See, for example, Leonard Outhwaite, The Atlantic: A History of an Ocean (New York: Coward-McCann; 1957), pp. 73-102, and more recently, Paul Butel, The Atlantic, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London and New York: Routledge; 1999), pp. 5-19. For a brief overview of the recent historiography of the the Atlantic, as well as other representative titles, see David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800 (Basingstoke, Hamps., and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan; 2002), pp. 11-27, 250-254.

with developments around the Mediterranean, we now know that coastal communities of considerable sophistication had existed just as early in the North Atlantic and elsewhere, and it is only now that these other contributions to our own histories are receiving their proper due.<sup>30</sup>

Chapter five examines mankind's relation to the ocean, and the characteristics that support the latter's claim to be a frontier -- possibly the oldest that still survives -- in a more or less traditional "neo-Turneresque" sense. This discussion highlights what can be seen as distinct features of oceanic and coastal frontier environments, some of which parallel those of their land-bound counterparts, others of which are unique to the watery realm. The frontiers on which mariners navigate, for instance, can be divided into "maritime coastal" and "maritime-oceanic," the first designating off-shore waters used for fishing and coastal shipping, and the latter referring to open ocean expanses, far distant from the home-port communities from whence the voyagers depart. The mariners involved, of course, comprise a heterogeneous group of men and women. They include the various types of distant seafarers who "sail the ocean blue" in search of trade and adventure, the inshore and off-shore fishers who still reap the ocean's decreasing bounty in a more direct manner, and the naval sailors who provide security for their fellows.<sup>31</sup>

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See, for example, Barry Cunliffe, Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and Its Peoples, 8000 BC-AD 1500 (Oxford: Oxford University; 2001-2004), Jon C. Henderson's narrower The Atlantic Iron Age: Settlement and Identity in the First Millennium BC (London and New York: Routledge; 2007), and Michael Pearson, The Indian Ocean (London and New York: Routledge; 2003), especially Chapter 3.

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Although space and time precluded the inclusion here of an intended chapter on the role of navies in securing maritime and oceanic frontiers, we must bear in mind that the seas

But despite differences in the details of their daily labours, all are united by the fact that they must master skills necessary for survival in an often treacherous environment of wind and water, and all can be considered to be what Michael Pearson calls “people of the sea.”<sup>32</sup>

Another unique aspect of the overall maritime is its bifurcated nature. This last arises from the symbiosis that exists between the ocean proper, which often was perceived as an “Otherworld,” and the supporting coastal strip of the ocean’s rim, a liminal border zone that Newfoundlanders call the “landwash.” This serves as a self-contained “border zone,” separating and at times even isolating the immediate “maritime frontier” from the landlocked interior, and its most prominent symbolic feature is the area between the high and low tide-lines. Indeed, for some this tidal zone has been a frontier in its own right. “The first frontier,” writes Salman Rushdie, “was the water’s edge, and there was the first moment, because how could there not been such a moment, when a living thing came from the ocean, crossed that boundary, and found that it could breathe.” Of course, he continues, the behaviour of “these beach-crawlers” was driven by such “mighty, impersonal driving forces” as natural selection and random mutation,”

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have long been a realm of violent conflict, and that historically, it is the naval sailor that has helped make possible many of the activities of their fellow maritime frontiersmen.

<sup>32</sup>

Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London and New York: Routledge; 2003), pp. 27, 41. Drawing on Fernand Braudel, Pearson divides coastal dwellers into “people of the sea,” for whose societies the sea has considerable significance, and “people on the sea” for whom, while they live near the sea or on the coast, its influence is not an essential (but rather is an optional) social factor.

rather than by heroism, daring or an “adventurous, transgressive spirit.”<sup>33</sup> But for humans, whether consciously or unconsciously, this intertidal beach has often been a “liminal” borderline, the line which we must cross when moving back and forth between the physical realms of earth and water, of this World and an Otherworld. As such, the tidal line also serves as the central point of symbiotic contact between those who cross and recross that line to wrest a living from the seas, and for those who depend on these “boundary-crossers” activities for their own livelihoods on land.. Consequently, Michael Pearson suggests, when writing of the interactions between land and sea, we too should be amphibious, rather like the beach-crawling mudskipper (Periophthalmus koelreuters) discovered in the Seychelle Islands by Jacques Cousteau in 1967.<sup>34</sup>

Having discussed the maritime frontier and its frontiersmen, Chapter Six examines the impact on the habits and consciousness of that other element of the symbiosis, the associated coastal communities and the inhabitants. Although many if not most coastal inhabitants may never personally “take to the sea,” many still support the maritime frontiersmen, be it directly or indirectly, so that their own consciousness, along with their lives and the prosperity of their shoreline communities, usually have been closely tied to those who do cross the line. So while they are not “frontiersmen” per se, those coastal dwellers have hopes, fears and world views that also in large part are shaped by their proximity to the frontier of Ocean and the liminal shoreline. “It is not easy for one raised

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Salman Rushdie, Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction, 1992-2002 (Toronto, Ont.: Alfred A. Knopf Canada; 2002), pp. 349-350.

<sup>34</sup>M. Pearson, The Indian Ocean, p. 30

by the seaside,” Salem’s Peabody Museum director Ernest Dodge once observed, “where most of his ancestors have for generations got their livelihood, to wash the sound of the rote from his ears or the smell of the mudflats from his nostrils.”<sup>35</sup> Indeed, the symbiotic relationship is so close that if we term seamen as “frontiersmen,” we might conceive of these coastal dwellers as inhabiting a borderland. As such, they become the de facto “borderers” of the maritime realm and, in many ways, the People and Keepers of the Portals to the Oceanic Otherworld. For this reason, this present study concludes by returning to the issue of maritime-coastal versus land-bound farming cultures, and hopefully lays a foundation for a future, fuller study of the role of Ocean with its coastlines as a series of recurring frontiers, the Atlantic included, for at least the last 9000 years of human history.

Finally, a comment on the sources used is in order. Given the geographical and temporal range of topics covered in what follows, it was clearly impossible to examine all secondary, let alone the primary sources involved. Oskar Spate remarked regarding his massive, three-volume history of the Pacific since Magellan that it “would take a lifetime to visit all the shores and islands of the Pacific, [and] one sometimes feels that it would take nine years to master fully the vasty literature of the deep....” Consequently, he explained that it was inevitable that he had relied “on secondary sources and on printed collections of primary and sub-primary sources.” This consideration, of course, is equally true with regard to the present study, the scope of which is still more extensive in almost

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Ernest S. Dodge, New England and the South Seas (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 1965), p. vii.

every respect. Consequently, like Spate and other historians of seas and oceans who play “the generalist game,” I have attempted to draw a number of syntheses from “reputable authorities,” and selections from contemporary commentaries, in the full realization that lacunae undoubtedly exist, and then combine these into a larger narrative and interpretative whole.<sup>36</sup> If all do not find this convincing in all particulars, I hope it still may suggest new approaches that provoke further study and reinterpretation.

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Oskar H.K. Spate, The Pacific since Magellan, 3 vols. (Canberra: Australian National University; 1979-1988), 1, p. x.. Similar comments are made by Fernand Braudel, The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, 2 vols., trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper, 1966, 1976), 1 p. 18; and M. Pearson, The Indian Ocean, (who also cites Spate), pp. 10-12.



**PART I:  
FRONTIERS IN THEORY AND PRACTICE**

It's North you may run to the rime-ring'd sun,  
Or South to the blind Horn's hate;  
Or East all the way into Mississippi Bay,  
Or West to the Golden Gate;  
Where the blindest bluffs hold good, dear lass,  
And the wildest tales are true,  
And the men bulk big on the old trail, our own trail, the out trail,  
And life runs large on the Long Trail -- the trail that is always new.

-- Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), "The Long Trail" (c.1892?), in Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Inclusive Edition, 1885-1918 (Toronto; Copp Clark; 1919), pp. 189-192; entitled "L'Envoi" in Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, comp. and ed., The [New] Oxford Book of English Verse, A.D. 1250-1918, new ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1939, 1955), p. 1075.

**CHAPTER I:  
NORTH AMERICA'S FIRST "FRONTIERS":  
THREE CASE STUDIES**

Oh, East is East, and West is West,  
and never the twain shall meet,  
Till Earth and Sky stand presently  
at God's great Judgement Seat;  
But there is neither East nor West,  
Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,  
When two strong men stand face to face,  
though they come from the ends of the earth!

-- Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West" (1889), in Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Inclusive Edition, 1885-1918 (Toronto; Copp Clark; 1919), p. 268.

The term “frontier,” if not the associated “frontier theory,” long predated Frederick Jackson Turner’s paper on “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” When he first read before the American Historical Association’s annual meeting of 1893 in Chicago,<sup>1</sup> the West already was entrenched in the Americans’ popular mind as the arena of adventure and opportunity opened by the great Westward Movement into the vast Wilderness, a process enlivened by occasional outbursts of aboriginal resistance. But when Turner transformed that process into a powerful national myth, he simultaneously gave new content to the term “frontier” itself .

Although not necessarily without their own romantic overtones, the term’s connotations elsewhere were then somewhat different. These ranged from a line along which civilization clashed with barbarism to a state border, across which mass armies warily scrutinized their prospective enemies. In the minds of Anglo-Americans’ English cousins, for instance, the word provoked equally heroic images of the bitter wars fought along India’s Northwest Frontier with the allegedly treacherous tribesmen, presumably backed by Russian agents, and chronicled by Rudyard Kipling among others.<sup>2</sup> Still, as

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Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History.” Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1894), pp. 199-227, as reprinted in his The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt, 1920, 1953; reprint: New York and Toronto, Ont.: Dover Publications/General Publishing, 1996), 1-38, and abridged in Ray Allan Billington, ed., The Frontier Thesis: Valid Interpretation of American History? (New York: Holy, Rinehart and Winston; 1966), pp. 9-20.

2

See, for example, Archibald R. Colquhoun, Russia Against India: The Struggle for Asia, with special maps. (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1900). Colquhoun was a former British Deputy Commissioner to Burma, Chief Administrator of Mashonaland, a Gold Medallist of the Royal Geographical Society, The Times (of

the great French geographer-historian Lucien Febvre points out, the term “frontier” in English “appears as a latecomer” and, apart from some “metaphorical, abstract or philosophical” senses, it was “hardly ever used in respect to England itself.” India aside, the British instead preferred the term “border,” which signified a territorial edge or periphery, and “boundary” an associated line of demarcation.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, before World War I, the words frontier and boundary, “at least in the English language, were often used interchangeably.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Other Frontiers, Other Meanings**

As just suggested, popularization of the word frontier in England was associated with the apogee of the British Empire. Seeking justifications, many British generals and administrators consciously turned for a model to ancient Rome. They proclaimed themselves to be the new proconsuls, spreading civilization and holding their own limes,

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London) correspondent in the Far East, and author of two earlier books. This Anglo-Russian “cold war” is usefully reviewed in Peter Hopkirk, The Great Game (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), and its heroic “frontier” literature satirised in George MacDonald Fraser’s novel Flashman: From the Flashman Papers, 1839-1841 (London and New York: Penguin-Plume Books; 1969, 1984).

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Lucien Febvre, “Frontière: The Word and the Concept,” in Peter Burke, ed., A New Kind of History from the Writings of Le Febvre (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1973), 217. For a brief, but stimulating review of “The Historiography of Frontiers” see C.R. Whittaker, Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University; 1994), pp. 1-9.

4

Douglas M. Johnson, The Theory and History of Ocean Boundary-Making (Kingston, Ont., and Montreal, PQ: McGill-Queen’s University; 1988), p. 3. He argues that the distinction between “the linear nature of a boundary and the zonal character of a frontier” only emerged in the 1920s, so that in “normal English usage” today a “‘boundary’ almost invariably refers to a line, and ... ‘frontier’ to a type of boundary zone.”

called frontiers, against the barbarians beyond.<sup>5</sup> But despite this heightened interest, in 1907 Britain's proconsul of proconsuls, Lord Curzon, complained to an audience in Oxford that frontiers remained little studied. Although they were "the razor's edge on which hang suspended the modern issues of war or peace, of life or death of nations," he lamented, the student of international affairs might "ransack the catalogues of libraries, ... study the writings of scholars and ... find the subject is almost wholly ignored." In fact, he claimed, the literature available on frontier issues would hardly fill a single library shelf.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, by the 1890s a "frontier," when associated with a recognized nation-state, had acquired a geographically demarcated and legally defined significance in the minds of international jurists, students of world affairs, statesmen, politicians and soldiers, both in Europe and the Americas. As Curzon noted in his above-mentioned lectures, frontiers

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C.R. Whittaker, *Ibid.*, pp. 1-3; Apart from literary figures like Rudyard Kipling and Sir Henry Newbolt, the concept of frontier adventure on the Indian periphery was popularized by periodicals like The Boy's Own Paper (which also appeared as an annual). Although it does deal with this aspect explicitly, a useful review to British culture during this period in general is John M. MacKenzie, "Empire and Metropolitan Culture," in Andrew Porter, The Oxford History of the British Empire, iii: The Nineteenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University; 1999), pp. 270-293. On the nature of the Imperial frontiers in the Indian region see Alastair Lamb, Asian Frontiers: Studies in a Continuing Problem (London: Paul Mall; 1968), and Dorothy Woodman, Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian and Russian Rivalries (New York: Frederick A. Praeger; 1969).

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Lord George Nathaniel Curzon, Marquis of Kedleston, Frontiers. The Romanes Lecture (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1907), pp. 7, 5. This was reissued in his Frontiers: A Study in Political Geography (Oxford: Oxford University; 1918). The attitudes prevailing in Oxford towards the Empire are outlined in "All Souls, the British Empire, and World Power, 1897-1918," chapter one of William Roger Lewis, In the Name of God, Go! Leo Amery and the British Empire in the Age of Churchill (New York and London: W.W. Norton; 1992), pp. 27-74.

had become “the chief anxiety of nearly every Foreign Office in the civilised world, and are the subject of four out of five of every political treaties or conventions that are concluded....” He insisted that frontier policies therefore had become “of the first practical importance,” and that they exerted “a more profound effect upon the peace or warfare of nations than any other factor, political or economic.” For ultra nationalists, he added, frontiers often held a quasi-sacred and mystical status, the violation of which was a casus belli.<sup>7</sup>

Between 1860 and 1920 the Europeans raced to acquire colonial empires and partitioned Africa and other regions so that, as another French scholar puts it, this type of spatially-defined delimitation “was applied simultaneously in Europe and in the rest of the world.” This means that “the totality of the World's space was divided into states and entities bordered by linear frontiers.”<sup>8</sup> This same author defines these “state frontiers” as “spatial structures, linear in form, which serve to mark geopolitical divisions, both real and symbolic.” As such they “serve to mark the limits” within which a “political system” (a state) extends its sovereignty, and within which its administration has a degree of autonomy in exerting control and domination. Since he defines states as “spatial sub-units,” he also argues that it is by defining limites in the form of recognized borders or frontiers “that politics are inscribed in space, and so are marked out, made unique and

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Lord Curzon, Frontiers (1907), p. 5. Also see L. Febvre, “Frontière: The Word and the Concept,” p. 214.

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M. Foucher, L'invention des frontières (Paris: Fondation pour les Études de Défense Nationale; 1986), pp. 33-34.

differentiated.” Furthermore, he points out that the "global character of the compartmentalization [cloisonnement] of the world" even embraces (at least partially) the oceans as well, and that today [1986], over four-fifths of the earth's frontiers are to be found in the Third World.<sup>9</sup>

This said, we should add that if in English the terms “frontier” and “border” are still often interchangeable, “boundary” is also often used less precisely for informal limits based on folkloric, linguistic or social-economic factors. A state frontier, on the other hand, is almost always a formal border and legally demarcated boundary created by conscious political action.<sup>10</sup> Since in a universe of Clausewitzian realism, “political” may well mean “military,” Lord Curzon’s concerns were well-founded.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the speed

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Ibid., p. 22.

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See the discussion in John Armstrong, Nations before Nationalism (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina; 1982), pp. 9-10, and for all aspects of practical boundary, border and frontier issues, John Robert Victor Prescott, Political Frontiers and Boundaries (London: Allen and Unwin; 1987), esp. pp. 14-53. Ladis K.D. Kristof draws the interesting distinction that a frontier is “outer-oriented” and “a manifestation of ‘centrifugal’ forces,” but that a boundary ‘inner-oriented’ and as a “separating” element, is a “manifestation of ‘centripetal’ forces;” see his “The Nature of Frontiers and Boundaries,” Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 49 (1959), pp. 271-274.

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I refer here, of course, to the German soldier-philosopher Karl von Clausewitz’s famous insight that “War is ... a continuation of policy [or politics] by other means. It is not merely a political act but a real political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, a conduct of political intercourse by other means;” Karl von Clausewitz, War, Politics, and Power: Translations from **On War and I Believe and Profess**, trans., ed. and intro. Edward M. Collins (Chicago, IL: Regency-Gateway; 1962), p. 83. This dictum is a favorite among proponents of “realism” in international relations, who frequently use and abuse it to justify resorts to the use of force.

with which the rest of the earth was “globalized” after 1860-1870, with the subsequent spread of European-style territorial frontiers, also explains the lack of a large bibliography on this process which so exercised him.

On the continent, meanwhile, definitions differed somewhat from those accepted in Great Britain. There, Lucien Febvre explained in the 1920s, the term “frontier” was used in three related yet distinct ways: (1) for the strip of land or zone adjacent to a line of demarcation, or along the edge of a state, or as an adjective describing such a zone, province, territory; (2) for the demarcation or border-line as such; and (3) for a defensive barrier, be this a continuous fortified line paralleling the line of demarcation (or boundary), or a zone organized and equipped for a defense in depth.<sup>12</sup> This last reflects the fact that in French, during the 1200s-1300s, the term frontière had referred to the frontal facade of a building, and to the front rank of troops formed up in a line of battle. By the 1400s-1500s these meanings had merged, been extended so as to regularly signify a militarized or fortified border in the same sense as the earlier Roman limes, and in this sense the term first entered the English vocabulary as well. Overall, during Europe’s early modern period most frontiers were to some extent military in nature, although not always

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<sup>12</sup>

L. Febvre, "Frontière: The Word and the Concept," p. 208. Despite some European attention to Turner, little has changed in this regard in Europe. As recently as May 2008, an article on Davy Crockett in a French popular history journal felt it necessary to include a marginal explanation defining “frontier” in this context as follows: “It marks the limit, in the West, of the United States that evolved gradually and in proportion to the movement to the centre of the continent. It differs for the pioneers, the trappers, the stockmen, or the farmers. For a long time it was fixed on the Mississippi;” Farid Aneur, “Les multiples vies de Davy Crockett,” Historia: A la lumière du passé le présent s’éclaire (May 2008), No. 737, p. 29.



to the same extent as those maintained by the Habsburgs along their boundaries with the Ottoman Turks.<sup>13</sup> As for the concept of a fortified frontier, this only reached its full development after 1678 thanks to the great French military engineer, Sebastien le Prestre de Vauban (1633-1707), who built thirty-three new fortresses, and improved or rebuilt another 300 along France's borders and coastlines. In particular, with the support of Louis XIV, he created a double line of fortresses and supporting installations along France's eastern and northeastern border to form the so-called "iron frontier." This aimed at blocking the enemy's invasion routes into the kingdom while simultaneously providing bases for Louis XIV's advances into his opponent's territory. Equally important from our point of view, we shall see that this was the model followed by the military leadership of New France in the mid-1700s.<sup>14</sup> Modern Spanish has three words associated with borders and borderlands: limite (a boundary); confin (a line of demarcation); and frontera (a border or frontier zone, region or territory). Of these the last -- both in the singular and plural (las fronteras) -- is the only one to appear in oldest surviving Castilian poetical

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Gunther E. Rothenberg and Jean Nouzille, "Military Frontiers," in Andre Corvisier, A Dictionary of Military History, exp. Ed., trans Chris Turner and ed. John Childs (Oxford: Blackwell; 1994), pp. 287-291.

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L. Febvre, "Frontière: The Word and the Concept," pp. 208-211; Henri Guerlac, "Vauban: The Impact of Science on War," in Peter Paret, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy (Oxford: Oxford University; 1986), pp. 64-90; Christopher Duffy, The Fortress in the Age of Vauban and Frederick the Great, 1660-1789: Siege Warfare, Volume II (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1985), pp. 63-97. For more on the continuing development of "military frontiers" see Robin Higham, "Military Frontiersmanship: A Hypothesis from the Point of View of the Encroacher," in International Commission on Military History, Acta 4: Ottawa 23-25 VIII 1978 (Ottawa, 1979), pp. 52-60, 323-326; and his "Frontiers – A Global View," Journal of the West, 34 (Oct. 1995), No. 4, pp. 48-53.

work, the famous Poema del Cid. In this last, as Febvre points out, the term never refers to a demarcated line or boundary, but to a border “region or territory separating two peoples,” and it appears have never been used with regard to “either to fortifications or to a military defence system.”<sup>15</sup> Yet as the action in The Cid makes clear, fortresses were a prominent feature of the medieval Spanish fronteras. Thus later authorities disagree with Febvre and insist that over time, the term did indeed refer to a “line of forts.”<sup>16</sup> As for New Spain, there the fort or presidio joined the church’s mission-station and cattle ranch in the institutional trinity of Spanish rule in West Florida and north Mexico from Texas to California, regions subsequently annexed to the United States. But if the Iberian conquistadores may well have regarded America as a frontier, one specialist in Spanish colonial documents maintains that the term frontera only begins appearing regularly, especially with regard to the American interior southwest and California, in the 1760s-1770s.<sup>17</sup> Whatever the case, given that the American intruders into these regions adopted the ranch and skills of the cowboy, it seems unlikely that the Spanish concept of frontera had no influence on attitudes among the arriving “Anglo” settlers of the new American Southwest as well.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>

L. Febvre, "Frontière: The Word and the Concept," p. 217.

<sup>16</sup>

J. Armstrong, Nations before Nationalism, p. 71. For the text of The Cid see Richard Barber, ed., Epics of the Middle Ages, illus John Vernon Lord (London: The Folio Society; 2005), pp. 285-347.

<sup>17</sup>

Personal communication from David Dodson, Pensacola, Florida, 20 June 2008.

<sup>18</sup>

See, for example, the map (with commentary) of Spanish presidios in New Mexico in

Such possible linguistic borrowings aside, the significant point here is that none of the above-cited traditional definitions makes any explicit, or even implicit, connection between a military-political “frontier or border on the one hand, and agricultural settlement, an “advancing line” or otherwise, on the other. This is not to say that the word frontier was absent from the American vocabulary before the American Civil War (1861-1865), but until that time few if any writers used the term to denote an area of pioneer settlement as such. Rather, in the North American context as elsewhere, it long continued to retain the traditional European meaning of a border region or province, the most important feature of which was not the fact of recent settlement, but its exposure to the threat of “cross-border” attacks. Parts of Medieval Iberia or of East Europe aside, most areas designated as frontiers after the 1200s-1300s already had well established populations who in part often lived in fortified cities, and they frequently contained borders that were already to some extent demarcated as well. As a consequence, there

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1729 in Paul E. Cohen, Mapping the West: America's Westward Movement, 1524-1890, intro. David Rumsey (New York: Rizzoli International; 2002), pp. Recent accounts of the nature of New Spain's northern frontier include John Francis Bannon, The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston; 1970); David J. Weber, The Spanish Frontier in North America (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1992); Oakah L. Jones, Jr., “Spanish Civil Communities and Settlers in Frontier New Mexico, 1790-1810,” in William S. Coker, ed., Hispanic-American Essays In Honor of Max Leon Moorhead (Pensacola, FL: Perdido Bay Press; 1979), pp. 37-60; and John L. Kessell, Spain in the Southwest: A Narrative History of Colonial New Mexico, Texas and California (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 2002). On the frontier institutions in particular, see Herbert E. Bolton, “The Mission as a Frontier Institution in the Spanish American Colonies,” Odie B. Faulk, “The Presidio: Fortress or Farce?” and Sandra L. Myres, “The Ranching Frontier: Spanish Institutional Backgrounds of the Plains Cattle Industry,” along with the attached bibliographies, in David J. Weber, ed., New Spain's Far Northern Frontier: Essays on Spain in the American West, 1540-1821 (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University; 1988), pp. 49-97.

was no necessary, direct relationship between the opening of new regions to settlement and creation of a “frontier,” a connection that often is held to be essential to Turner’s vision. The origins of this coupling of the colonial pioneer hamlets and farmsteads with expanding borders to create a conceptual basis for some great American “Frontier,” as well as the implications of this coupling, therefore deserve careful attention. For if the act of settlement is accepted as a fundamental and necessary aspect of any frontier, it is indeed be absurd to count Ocean as one of mankind’s most challenging frontiers, one that now as in the past still “both shapes our character and tests our mettle.”<sup>19</sup>

This issue, and the story of this archetypical “American Frontier” or, in its later and final stage, “the West,” will be considered throughout the first part of this study. That story may or may not deserve to be called the “creation myth” of the United States, but here it is sufficient to observe that in one form or another, few would deny that over the past century, some version of the “frontier” concept has often been a central element in historians’ views of all periods of American history, and in the self-perceptions of many of that nation’s citizens.<sup>20</sup> “Like most Southerners of my generation,” writes the ex-American art critic John Bentley Mays, “...I was reared on the meat of Frontier

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Salman Rushdie, Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction, 1992-2002 (Toronto, Ont.: Alfred A. Knopf Canada; 2002), p. 381.

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This issue of “myth” recently was discussed at length by David Hamilton Murdoch, The American West: The Invention of a Myth (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press; 2001), especially pp. 13-23. Although he focuses on “the West,” much of his analysis is equally relevant to the “frontier” in general, as is that in Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, Frontiers: A Short History of the American West (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 2007), chapters 15-16.

mythology,” with the image of a “freedom like that born in the nation’s beautiful morning land of Conestoga wagons, racoon hats, and muzzle-loading rifles, which we call the Frontier.”<sup>21</sup> While the “West” is subsumed within the latter, he considers that the “Frontier” proper in Virginia and North Carolina opened after 1720 when the swelling wave of European settlement pushed westward past the Tidewater, crossed the Fall Line into the Appalachian Piedmont, and in time even spilled over the mountains. “As they cut down the forests on the inland hills, and began to turn and plant the soil, “ Mays tells us, “they were turning the zone of their dwelling into a place apart – more a west-moving band of rough occupation than a delimited zone of New World civilization....” In this manner, he concludes, this region “was becoming the frontier, the site of a new American mind’s emergence, and of a model of existence shaped by [Calvinist] intolerance, and much tolerance for the isolation, hardship, and conflict with the resistant piedmont land.”<sup>22</sup>

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John Bentley Mays, Power in the Blood: An Odessey of Discovery in the American South (Toronto, Ont.: Viking-Penguin Books; 1997, 1998), p. 139. He is an art critic and columnist who now lives in Toronto.

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Ibid., p. 113. The settlement of Piedmont Virginia is reviewed in David Hackett Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York and Oxford: Oxford University, 1989, 1991), pp. 605-782, and most recently reviewed in Peter Wallenstein, Cradle of America: Four Centuries of Virginia History (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas; 2007), pp. 49-61. Mays’ view of the reality of “backwoods” isolation, and the other aspects of life on the early frontier, is borne out by Thomas D. Clark’s sketch of “frontier life, 1750-1850,” in Howard R. Lamar, ed., The Reader’s Encyclopedia of the American West (New York: Harper and Row; 1977), pp. 419-420, as well as the text and excerpts in Emily Foster, ed. The Ohio Frontier: An Anthology of Early Writings (Louisville, KY: University of Kentucky; 1996), pp. 9-51. The early settlement is analysed in its various aspects generally in Bernard Bailyn, The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction (New York: I.B. Tauris; 1986), and more narrowly in

Perhaps so, but if one shakes off Turner's heroic construct, this is far from obvious. But given the prevalence of discussions of "the Frontier" in the twentieth-century historiography of the United States, in one way or another Turner's concept has not surprisingly framed most of the ensuing debates over American development. Yet the fact remains that the term seems to have been little used with regard to pioneer settlement as such before the 1860s-1870s, and that it gained wide currency in this sense only after Turner had advanced his theory in 1893.<sup>23</sup> This is not to say that the word frontier was absent from the American vocabulary before the American Civil War (1861-1865). Rather, the point is that until that time, few if any writers used it to denote an area of pioneer settlement as such. On the contrary, it long retained its traditional European meaning of a border region or province, and almost always one that is under a "cross-border" threat. And despite its frequent use in the works of later historians, even in this sense the term "frontier" is remarkable for its absence from English documents and literature on North America that predate the French and Indian Wars that opened in 1689.

### **Early Puritan New England as a "Frontier"**

Americans' traditional view of the military aspects their nation's frontier is well summed

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Richard B. Drake, A History of Appalachia (Louisville, KY: University of Kentucky; 2001), pp. 29-39.

<sup>23</sup>

On this issue, also see the views expressed in J.T. Juricek, "American Usage of the Word 'Frontier' from Colonial Times to Frederick Jackson Turner," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society (February 1966), No. 110, pp. 10-34, and Fulmer Wood, "Notes on the History of the Word 'Frontier,'" Agricultural History, 22 (April 1948), 78-83. What follows here, however, is based on an independent survey of contemporary sources.

up by an official text on military history issued for officer candidates in the army's reserve. When discussing "frontier forts," its authors explain that the pioneer settlers, when faced with aboriginal opposition to their expansion, "tried to provide some permanent protection for their frontiers by erecting forts along the westernmost line of settlement in each colony, moving them forward as the line of settlement moved." Of course, they add, these were not "the elaborate earth and masonry structures of Europe, but simple rectangular enclosures, their walls constructed of upright pointed logs," with blockhouses usually being placed at the corners. These provided havens for settlers in times of threatened attack since the Indians, lacking artillery, could only take even such "rude frontier forts" by ruse or a surprise assault, by setting them ablaze, or by a costly direct assault.<sup>24</sup> The implications of this admittedly simplistic and generalised description are (1) that the frontier line of settlement and defense moved forward hand-in-hand, and (2) that it was frontier pioneers themselves, and not the constituted colonial or American governments, who both created the frontier and built the forts that preserved it. Since both these implications are integral to the American frontier "myth," they must be borne in mind and tested in the following discussion of the formation of the three colonial "frontiers" of Massachusetts, Virginia to the south, and of French Acadia to the northeast.

It also perhaps is only to be expected that Turner himself analysed both

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United States. Department of the Army, American Military History, 1607-1958 (Washington, DC: Headquarters USA-US GPO, ROTC Manuel 145-20, July 1959), p. 18.

Massachusetts and Virginia, which he dubbed as parts of the “Old West,” or paid special attention to the emergence of “first official frontier of the Massachusetts Bay.” In it he perceived a “safety valve” -- a geographical region within which a continuing expansion of settlements created flourishing democratizing influences that provided an environment encouraging the social mobility of the industrious and able pioneers. Yet in fairness to Turner, he accepted that the term “frontier” only really becomes appropriate there after the end of King Philip’s War in 1676, and for much the same reasons as I outline below.<sup>25</sup> For before that time, as Geoffrey Plank points out, the initial British settlers did not come for conquest but to live quiet, prosperous and pious lives. This does not, of course, mean that their lives were without dangers. After all, they did require land and, since America “was already occupied.,” various groups of Indians naturally resisted and the “colonists fought back, believing always that they were acting in self-defense. Publicly and privately, they claimed that they had originally had wanted to keep to themselves and live in peace,” and “protested that the Indians had initiated the fighting.”<sup>26</sup>

In any case, despite lingering tensions after the brief Pequot War of the 1630s, until

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Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Old West,” and “The First Official Frontier of Massachusetts Bay,” in The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt, 1920, 1953). Reprint: New York and Toronto, Ont.: Dover Publications/General Publishing, 1996), pp.67-125, and 39-66, respectively. Indicative of Turner’s influence is a recent statement that his essay on the “Old West,” and especially pp. 99-106, is a “classic early statement on the southern backcountry;” Stephen J. Hornsby, British Atlantic, American Frontier: Spaces of Power in Early Modern British North America (Hanover, NH: University of New England; 2004), note 126, p. 278.

<sup>26</sup>

Geoffrey Gilbert Plank, "The Culture of Conquest: The British Colonists and Nova Scotia, 1690-1759," 2 vols. Doctoral Dissertation, Princeton University, 1994, p. 2.



the 1670s attention in New England focused not so much on fixing a border segregating colonists from the aboriginal inhabitants, but rather on fixing internal boundaries between the ever more numerous settlements there, or on relations with the French settlements in “Acadia or Nova Scotia” to the northeast. Before that time the settlement pattern of the English colonies themselves to a large extent had inhibited the establishment of any “Indian frontier.” This pattern resulted from the scattered nature of the original colonies, from their rivalries and often disputed territorial claims *vis-à-vis* each other, and from the subsequent extension of their off-spring inland during the “Great Migration” of the 1630s-1640s as a series of successive autonomous “plantations” or “townships.” Mostly strung out in thin lines along the coast and up the various rivers into the interior, these last separated by wilderness forests with their Amerindian inhabitants.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, before 1676s no precise line ever existed between colonists and natives, their settlements

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This pattern is illustrated on the maps found in David Jaffee, People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History and Memory, 1630-1869 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University; 1999), p. 75, which also provides foundation dates; David Horowitz, The First Frontier: The Indian Wars and American Origins, 1607-1776 (New York: Simon and Schuster; 1978), p. 49; Armstrong Starkey, European and Native American Warfare, 1675-1815 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 1998), p. 58; and more generally, Ian K. Steele, Warpaths: Invasions of North America (New York and Oxford: Oxford University; 1994), pp. 104-105. The “Great Migration” from Old England and the process of establishing the settlement network in New England is reviewed in Louis B. Wright, The Atlantic Frontier: Colonial American Civilization (1607-1763) (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University; 1959, 1957), pp. 131-139; D.W. Meinig, The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 Years of History, I: Atlantic America, 1492-1800 (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1986), pp. 91-97; Alison Games, Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 1999), chapter 6; Alan Taylor, American Colonies (New York: Viking-Penguin; 2001), pp. 164-166. Meanwhile, the process of “serial town settlement” is analysed in D. Jaffee, People of the Wachusett, pp. 7-16, who also is critical (pp. 2-3) of the concepts of “frontier” proposed both Turner and others.

often were “in close proximity to one another and there was a great deal of peaceful interchange between the two peoples,” with cooperation and commerce being as common as conflict.<sup>28</sup>

In other words, the English settlers long had no reason to employ the technical term “frontier” in the sense it then was understood, and before the 1680s its use would have been premature at best.<sup>29</sup> Even so, Turner himself traces the origins of the later “frontier towns” of 1690s back to regulations prohibiting the inhabitants of Concord, Sudbury and Dedham, since they were “inland townes & but thinly populated,” from departing without official authorisation; to the designation of particular settlements by that title in a law of

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A. Starkey, European and Native American Warfare, p. 10. These relationships are analysed at length in Neal Salisbury, Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500-1643 (New York and Oxford: Oxford University; 1982, 1984), chapters 4-7, and more thematically in Karen Ordahl Kupperman, Indians and English: Facing Off in Early America (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University; 2000). Implicitly (and occasionally more explicitly as in Kupperman, chapter 3) both authors indicate that one problem faced by Europeans seeking clearly defined borders or boundaries was the very different political and legal outlooks of their aboriginal opposites.

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As Armstrong Starkey, European and Native American Warfare, p. 10, observes, it is equally true that “the traditional [Sic! – only since Turner!] concept of the frontier as the advancing edge of civilization against savagery and darkness no longer has meaning” in this context. For this reason, Starkey explains that he uses the term in two senses: “first, as the zone in which two cultures engaged one another in conflict and cooperation, and secondly and more importantly, as a form of warfare which was unconventional in the European sense, but which had its own inherent rules and methods.” While both characteristics were present in early New England (and elsewhere as well), and while other historians do the same, it is at best anachronistic to apply the adjective “frontier” to such situations. As we have seen, in Europe at the time, a “frontier” was a defined zonal region, usually based on a recognized borderline, between two political entities that usually were culturally similar and waged conventional forms of warfare.

1669; and its use in legislation enacted during King Philip's War as well.<sup>30</sup> Yet these usages are exceptional while, in line with the circumstances just outlined, the only real fortifications built in New England before the outbreak of that conflict in 1675 were erected largely to repel attacks from the sea by England's European rivals. These include the major hill works at Plymouth (1621-1624) and Boston (1632), which was supported by nearby Fort William (1635). These were supplemented by a string of coastal posts that to the north eventually ran from the Star Fort in Portsmouth (1653) to Fort Stage at Gloucester (1623) and Fort William at Salem (1643), and to the south through Fort Saybrook (1635) to the Little Fort (1657) near New Haven and Fort Stratford (1639) at the mouth of the Housatonic River. Needless to say, the state of these works, varied over time. Usually they were built, refurbished or rebuilt over time to meet specific threats and when these passed, allowed once again to deteriorate. Such, for example, was the case with Fort Saybrook. Although attacked by the Pequots in 1636-1637, initially this stockade was built on Governor Winthrop's orders to deny entry into the Connecticut River to the Dutch, who had recently established a trading post with two guns near today's Hartford. By the time of the Pequot attack, it already had repelled a Dutch vessel and was being transformed into a proper fortification by a military engineer imported from England for the purpose. Subsequently, after the stockade was destroyed by fire in 1647, it was replaced by a fort of earth and stone, but later lost its strategic significance. Otherwise, aside from lesser forts appearing along the lower Connecticut during the

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F.J. Turner, "The First Official Frontier of Massachusetts Bay," pp. 39-40.

1630s as protection against both Dutch and Pequot raiders, and a few trading posts deep in the wilderness, before 1675 the colonists did not even fortify their own outlying settlements, regardless of any “frontier town” designation, let alone those lying closer to the coast.<sup>31</sup>

As for a possible external frontier to the northeast, there the issue centered on the possession and exploitation of the disputed Acadian region, on defining its “ancient bounds” or limites, and on demarcating a “boundary” or “border” somewhere in Maine, between the St. George and St. Croix rivers, to separate Acadia and the English colonies to the south.<sup>32</sup> Within this borderland the Baron Jean-Vincent d’Abbadie de Saint-Castin’s fort near Pentagoet on the Penobscot served as a persistent flashpoint after the mid-1670s.<sup>33</sup> While it is true the the English Crown had ceded that fort to the French, and

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New England’s early fortifications are detailed in J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America: The Forts that Defended America, 1600 to the Present, illus. Tomasz Idzikowski (Cambridge, MA: Perseus-Da Capo Press; 2004), pp. 52-57, and especially the map (p. 54) which provides the foundation date for all identified defensive works from Plymouth in 1622 to the outbreak of the Revolution in 1775. The Connecticut River positions were the Windsor blockhouse (1637) and the Wetherfield Fort (1639), as well as the Dutch Fort Good Hope, built in 633.

<sup>32</sup>

For the terms employed in the day’s documents see, for example, see the samples in Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and West Indies, 25 vols. (London, 1880; republished: Vaduz: Kraus Reprints, 1964), especially vols. 1-3, and E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., Documents relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York procured in Holland, England and France by John Romeyn Brodhead, Esq. 15 vols. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons; 1853-1887), especially vols. 5-9.

<sup>33</sup>

The history and archaeology of this particular French outpost is detailed in Alaric Faulkner and Gretchen Faulkner, The French at Pentagoet, 1635-1674: An Archaeological Portrait of the Acadian Frontier (Augusta, ME and St. John, ME: Maine Historic Preservation Commission-New Brunswick Museum; 1987), pp. 1-35, and their

fixed the frontier on the Kennebec, some thirty leagues to the west, the New Englanders' expansion continued apace. As London's representative Edward Randolph observed in 1676, Massachusetts' "present limits are as large as the government please to make them, who declare they do not yet know the boundaries of their commonwealth," despite past decisions to the contrary.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, in 1671 the Massachusetts General Court had taken advantage of a weak French presence to begin pushing their boundary northeast. Crossing the Kennebec, settlers quickly established farms on the St. George River, nine leagues to the east, and by 1674 had created the new county of Cornwall in the Pemaquid region. Massachusetts now regarded the Penobscot as the new southwestern border of Acadia or Nova Scotia, but for the French the line remained the Kennebec. The situation was complicated still further when Charles II's granted the disputed region to his brother, the Duke of York, in 1664, which grant he renewed a decade later. At that point, as groups of traders and land-speculators from Massachusetts began launching new aggressive thrusts into the regional vacuum created by the lack of a strong French presence, the situation

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"Fort Pentagoet and Castin's Habitation: French Ventures in Acadian Maine," in Emerson W. Baker, et al., American Beginnings: Exploration, Culture, and Cartography in the Land of Norumbega (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press; 1994), pp. 217-240. The useful essays in this volume deal with all aspects of the Maine coast during the 1600s. France's interest in this region in the early 1670s are detailed in John Graham Reid, "French Aspirations in the Kennebec-Penobscot Region, 1671," Maine Historical Society Quarterly, 23 (Fall 1983), no. 2, pp. 85-92.

<sup>34</sup>

Edward Randolph's response "to several heads of inquiry concerning the present state of New England," the version of which published in the Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and the West Indies, 1675-1676, 1087, 12 October 1676, Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and the West Indies, 1675-1676, 1087, 12 October 1676

became still more chaotic thanks to the raids of the Dutch captain Jurriaen Aernoutz.<sup>35</sup>

In the event, the New Englanders' advances farther into Maine and Acadia were halted, albeit briefly, by the Indian wars of the mid-1670s. Yet despite the inevitable frictions occasioned by conflicting territorial claims, the weakness of all parties in the region had frequently encouraged accommodation rather than hostility, regardless of the state of relations existing between their larger colonial and imperial patrons. As was the case between "borderers" in other places and other eras, patterns of trade and mutual interests had created spheres of cooperation between New England settlers and the Acadian French (Saint-Castin included) on the one hand, and between Europeans and natives on the other.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, despite all efforts of diplomats in Europe, rival claims to this region bedeviled all attempts at demarcating a generally acceptable border that could be transformed in a recognized Anglo-French "frontier," fortified or otherwise<sup>37</sup>

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These events are usefully summarized in George A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts: A Study of Massachusetts-Nova Scotia Relations, 1630-1784 (Montreal, PQ: McGill-Queen's University Press; 1972), pp. 35-40.

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These mixed relationships are conveniently summarized in John Graham Reid, "An International Region of the Northeast: Rise and Decline, 1635-1762," in Stephan J. Hornsby, et al., eds., The Northeastern Borderlands: Five Centuries of Interaction (Fredericton, NB: University of Maine -- Acadiaensis; 1989), pp. 10-25, especially pp. 11-15, 18-21.

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These border issues are discussed at length in such early studies as Thomas F. Hutchinson, The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay, ed. L.S. Mayo, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1936; Kraus reprint, 1970), vol 1; and Pierre F.X. de Charlevoix, History and General Description of New France, trans. and ed. John Gilmary Shea, 6 vols. (New York: Francis P. Harper; 1900. Reprint: Chicago: Loyola University; 1962), vol. 3. Standard modern treatments include John Bartlet Brebner, New England's Outpost: Acadia Before the Conquest of Canada (New

Most scholars agree that within New England, as in the other British colonies and the later United States, the fundamental issue that made wars with the original inhabitants inevitable was that of ownership of land. In this regard the situation differed from that found in Canada to the north. Within the latter's borders, anthropologist Bruce Trigger tells us, it "is significant that not once was there a case of serious or prolonged conflict between Europeans and Indians...."<sup>38</sup> Apart from a lack settlement pressure due to the less welcoming northern climate and a more forbidding forested wilderness, this also undoubtedly reflects the fact that at least before 1815, the cooperation of all parties in

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York: Columbia University Press; 1927); Gustave Lanctot, A History of Canada, trans. Josephine Hambleton and Margaret M. Cameron, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 1963-1965), vol. 2, chapters 16-19; Max Savelle, The Origins of American Diplomacy: The International History of Angloamerica, 1492-1763 (New York: Macmillan; 1967); John Graham Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland: Marginal Colonies in the Seventeenth Century (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto Press-Huron Historical Parks and Ontario Ministry of Culture; 1981); and most recently, N.E.S. Griffiths, From Migrant to Acadian: A North American Border People, 1604-1755 (Montreal, PQ: McGill-Queen's University Press; 2005), chapters 4-6.

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Bruce G. Trigger, The Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660, 2 vols. in one (Montreal and Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University; 1987), p. 3. This somewhat exaggerates the situation and Trigger himself admits (n. 3, p. 435.) the "partial exception" of French treatment of Newfoundland's Beothuk in the 1700s. One should add, however, that starting at least with the attacks on the Red River settlement of 1815-1816, and continuing on through Louis Riel's Northwest Rebellions of 1870 and 1885, competition for land served as a cause of conflict between settlers and the Indian-Metis peoples of Canada's West; see, for example, Lord Selkirk's Statement Respecting the Earl of Selkirk's Settlement upon the Red River in North America; Its Destruction in 1815 and 1816; and the Massacre of Governor Semple and his Party, with Observations upon a Recent Publication (London: John Murray; 1816. Reprint: Toronto: Coles Publishing; 1870); George F.G. Stanley, The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1960); and Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies: A History (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1984), chapters 5-10.

Canada in the lucrative fur trade.<sup>39</sup> But the colonists in New England who sought land to farm instead, when possible occupied woodland areas already cleared by the Natives for their own use, and introduced pigs and other animals that brought ecological change.<sup>40</sup> Although disease “providentially” thinned Amerindian numbers, there the drawing of fixed borders between the aborigines and newcomers still made little sense within the existing patterns of population. Rather, before the 1680s, when issues of “bounds,” boundaries or “limits” did arise, the disputes remained largely those between the colonists own townships and “plantations,” and not with the people they were slowly dispossessing.<sup>41</sup> Even so, with the occupation of land in the Connecticut Valley in the

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B.G. Trigger, Children of the Aataentsic, p. 3, stresses the relatively unattractive features of Canada for farmers moving out of the St. Lawrence valley, and the significance of French-Indian cooperation in the fur trade is stressed in W.J. Eccles, The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760 (Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press; 1969). In this regard, the near symbiotic relationship between the Acadian pioneers and their Micmac neighbours, or between dike-land farmers and forest hunter-fishers, deserves attention, but this too might have eventually collapsed thanks to the pressure of an increasing Acadian population; see Andrew Hill Clark, Acadia: The Geography of Early Nova Scotia to 1760 (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin; 1968), pp. 375-378, and David R. Jones, “From Frontier to Borderland: The Acadian Community in a Comparative Context, , 1605-1710,” Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society Journal, 7 (2004), pp. 22-24, 34.

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Howard S. Russell, A Long Deep Furrow: Three Centuries of Farming in New England, abridged and foreword Mark Lapping (Hanover, NH: University of New England; 1982), pp. 13-15, 82-83, 320, and William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology in New England (New York: Hill and Wang; 1983, 1985), pp. 128-149.

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The issues of drawing boundaries for New England’s settlements is outlined in W. Cronon, Changes in the Land, pp. 54-81, and in Virginia, in Darrett B. Rutman and Anita H. Rutman, A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650-1750 (New York: W.W. Norton; 1984), pp. 52-60. The continuing boundary disputes between the colonies, later states, were only resolved after the American Revolution; see Andro



early 1630s and a growing influx of farmer-settlers during the Great Migration, the land issue did help fuel the frictions that exploded in the war of 1636.<sup>42</sup> Pequot power was then destroyed by an English example of the European style of “total war” as demonstrated in the massacre at Mystic Fort in 1637 when, as a triumphal American chronicle of the early 1880s later proclaimed, that “tribe perished in a day.”<sup>43</sup> Other native groupings remained, however, and most colonists still lived side-by-side, for almost

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Linklater, The Fabric of America: How Our Borders and Boundaries Shaped the Country and Forged Our National Identity (New York: Walker and Company; 2007).

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The numerous accounts of the Pequot War include the Puritan leader William Bradford’s Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 1970), pp.294-297; Alfred A. Cave’s full-scale study, The Pequot War (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts; 1996), as well as William V. Moore, Indian Wars of the United States from the Discovery to the Present Time (Philadelphia, PA: W.A. Leary; 1851), pp. 118-122; Francis Jennings, The Invasions of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina; 1975), pp. 188-226; D. Horowitz, The First Frontier, pp. 38-50; N. Salisbury, Manitou and Providence, pp. 211-239; Patrick K. Malone, The Skulking Way of War: Technology and Tactics among the New England Indians (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University; 1991), pp. 44-45, 96-105; I.K. Steele, Warpaths, pp. 91-94; K.O. Kupperman, Indians and English, pp. 229-239; and Nathaniel Philbrick, Mayflower: A Story of Courage, Community, and War (New York: Viking-Penguin; 2006), pp. 178-179.

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A.S. Barnes, A Brief History of the United States (New York and Chicago, IL: A.S. Barnes; 1881), p. 63. Written in the wake of Custer’s disaster at the Little Big Horn, this first chapter in the war with the “Red” Indian “savages” not surprisingly exaggerates the extent of the Anglo-colonists victory. Nonetheless, from 300 to 700 Pequot men, women and children were slaughtered; Colin G. Calloway, New Worlds for All: Indians, Europeans, and the Remaking of Early America (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University; 1997), pp. 97-99; also see Laurence M. Hauptman, “The Pequot War and Its Legacies,” in Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry, eds., The Pequots in Southern New England: The Rise and Fall of an American Indian Nation (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 1990), pp. 69-80, on the survival of other Pequots..

another four decades, with their Amerindian neighbours. As might be expected, relations were not always harmonious and, despite internal rivalries between both natives and newcomers alike, the latter's fear of a concerted attack was a secondary motive for the formation of United Colonies of New England in 1643, "whose first and last significant acts concerned Amerindians," whatever its other intended purposes.<sup>44</sup>

Another immediate confrontations were avoided in part due the natives' acceptance of Puritan dominance, and in part to a pause in the Great Migration resulting in large part from the outbreak of the Civil War in England, an event that even occasioned the return home of Puritans from America.<sup>45</sup> At the same time, some New Englanders efforts' to achieve accommodation between settlers and natives met with only limited success. A serious obstacle, as Viola Barnes once observed ironically, was that unlike the French who, "when necessary, could become Indians with the Indians, ... the English always sought to make the Indians into Englishmen."<sup>46</sup> So if some Natives – known as the

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I.K. Steele, Warpaths, p. 94. The United Colonies in their various incarnations are discussed by F. Jennings, Invasion of America, pp. 258-281, and N. Salisbury, Manitou and Providence, pp. 228-235, while the course of colonist-native relations before King Philip's War are detailed in Alden Vaughan, New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620-1675, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Norman, KS.; University Press of Kansas, 1995)

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I.K. Steele, Warpaths, p. 96. Susan Hardman Moore, Puritans: New World Settlers and the Call of Home (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 2007), provides a detailed study of the returnees.

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Viola Barnes, The Dominion of New England: A Study in British Colonial Policy (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1923), p. 215.

“Praying Indians” – did convert to Christianity,<sup>47</sup> suspicions remained. So, too, did the problem that the various colonies and settlements lacked any agreed upon Indian policy. The authorities in New York, whose inland reaches were coming into contact with tribes backed by French Quebec, worried that their New England neighbours lacked a realistic Indian diplomacy. Another complained that the Massachusetts Puritans needlessly antagonized the Natives by selling them rum at great profit, and then accusing them with intemperance.<sup>48</sup> Yet above all else, the demands of New England’s growing population for more land created a volatile situation which by the mid-1670s required only a spark to explode into full-scale warfare. This came in murder of the “Praying Indian” Sassamon in early 1675, and by late June the settlers were coming under attack in what is known as King Philip’s War.<sup>49</sup>

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The place of the “Praying Indians” in early colonial Massachusetts is described by Neil Salisbury, “Indians and Settlers in Southern New England: An Uneasy Balance,” in L.M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry, The Pequots, pp. 84-85; Jill Lepore, The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity (New York: Random House-Vintage; 1998, 1999), pp. 21-47; C.G. Calloway, New Worlds for All, pp. 74-77; D. Jaffee, People of the Wachusett, pp. 44-47, 60-66; K.O. Kupperman, Indians and English, chapter 4; and Dane Morrison, A Praying People: Massachusetts Acculturation and the Failure of the Puritan Mission, 1600-1690 (New York Peter Lang; 1995). The sincerity of some Puritans in pursuing mission and educational work among the local natives is evident from Thomas Hinkley’s search for a teacher for an Indian school in his “Letter to Isaac Foster [at Harvard College], c. Early May 1678,” and his report on Indian schools in a “Letter to William Stoughton and Joseph Dudley, Barnstable, 2 April 1685,” in “The Hinkley Papers,” in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, (Boston, 1861), ser. 4, vol. 5, pp. 14-15, and 132-134, respectively.

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Great Britain. Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series: America and the West Indies, 1675-1676, no. 721, iii, 12.

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John Sassamon’s murder is discussed at length in J. Lepore, The Name of War, pp. 21-

### Implications of King Philip's War

There is no need to discuss this conflict in any detail here.<sup>50</sup> Suffice it to say that the colonists again unleashed the horrors of the contemporary style of European "total war" on their Indian enemies, and repeated their success at Fort Mystic by killing hundreds of "rebels" when they stormed the Narragansett stronghold the Great Swamp in Rhode Island.<sup>51</sup> But in return, New England's settlers were now subjected for the first time by

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26, and the outbreak of hostilities in A. Starkey, European and Native American Warfare, pp. 66-68.

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The vast literature on King Philip's (or Metacom's) War includes W.V. Moore, Indian Wars of the United States, pp. 123-139; Douglas Edward Leach, Flintlock and Tomahawk: New England in Prince Philip's War [1958] (Reprint: East Orleans, MA: Parnassus Imprints; 1992); Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom, So Dreadful a Judgement: Puritan Responses to King Philip's War, 1676-1677 (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University; 1978); F. Jennings, The Invasions of America, pp. 298-326; D. Horowitz, The First Frontier, pp. 59-82; P.K. Malone, The Skulking Way of War, pp. 106-122; Russell Bourne, The Red King's Rebellion Racial Politics in New England, 1675-1678 (New York: Atheneum; 1990); I.K. Steele, Warpaths, pp. 99-109; J. Lapore, The Name of War; A. Starkey, European and Native American Warfare, pp. 57-82; James D. Drake, King Philip's War: Civil War in New England, 1675-1676 (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts; 1999); D. Jaffee, People of the Wachusett, pp. 64-79; Eric B. Schultz and Michael J. Tougias, King Philip's War: The History and Legacy of America's Forgotten Conflict (Woodstock, VT: Countryman Press; 1999); N. Philbrick, Mayflower, pp. 215-348, and so on.

<sup>51</sup>

The introduction of European style of "total warfare," along with the use of firearms, in these early struggles is discussed generally in C.G. Calloway, New Worlds for All, pp. 97-103; A. Starkey, European and Native American Warfare, pp. 80-82; Harold E. Selesky, "Colonial America," in Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos and Mark R. Shulman, eds., The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1994), pp. 59-85; and most extensively, in both P.M. Malone, The Skulking Way of War, chapters 2-5, and Guy Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness: The Triumph of European Warfare in the Colonial Northeast (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts; 2003), chapters 1-4. A somewhat revisionist view is presented in John Grenier, The First Way of War: American War

the full horrors of a guerrilla war, Wilderness-style. "Dear and honored sir, pray hard for us;" wrote one in early Spring 1676. For

prayer must be our battle-axe. The Lord awakens us all to repentance by the dreadful ruins and desolations which are made amongst us! We have been preserved here in a way of marvelous long-suffering. Though God hath now begun to pour out upon us the cup of trembling, yet the Lord doth remember us still with mercy; yea, great mercy. The 9th of this instant, being the Lord's Day, as we were at meeting in the forenoon, we were alarmed by the shooting of some guns from some of our garrisons, upon discovery of a house being in fire; which was Robert Latham's. His dwelling-house and barn are wholly consumed. This house was deserted but a few days before. He had considerable loss in lumber: the corn and the chief of his goods were saved. There were divers other out-houses rifled at the same time, but no more burnt. There was a horse or two killed, three or four carried away; some few swine killed. We sent out a party of men, on the Lord's Day night, upon discovery; who found their trackings. Our men judged there might be about ten of them. They followed them, by their tracking, for several miles; but having no provisions with them, they were forced to leave the pursuit. We are in expectation every day of an assault here. The Lord preserve us for our trial!<sup>52</sup>

Whether thanks to the Lord's intervention or not, in the event the reorganized United Colonies survived and, in retrospect, patriotic chroniclers of American "progress" have argued that whatever the justice of his cause, Philip's defeat "contributed to the rise of the United States."<sup>53</sup>

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Making on the Frontier (New York and Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 2005), chapter 1, and of the Amerindians' use of firearms during 1675-1676 in particular, in Brian J. Given, A Most Pernicious Thing: Gun Trading and Native Warfare in the Early Contact Period (Ottawa, Ont.: Carleton University; 1994).

<sup>52</sup>

"Letter from James Keith to Thomas Hinckley, Bridgewater, 17 April 1676," in "The Hinckley Papers," pp. 7-8. This was, of course, only a pale reflection of the violence being inflicted on other settlements.

<sup>53</sup>

W.V. Moore, Indian Wars of the United States, pp. 137-138.

Even so, as the Duke of Wellington remarked after Waterloo, it had been a damn near thing. Indeed, Russell Bourne considers the conflict had been a disaster, pure and simple. Over the course of some fourteen months, fifty-two of New England's ninety towns had suffered attacks, and of these twenty-five been plundered and seventeen burnt to the ground. As a consequence, 12,000 homes reportedly were razed, 8000 head of cattle slaughtered, and some 3000 settlers killed. Meanwhile, thousands of others crowded as refugees into Boston and a handful of other coastal sanctuaries, where they became wards of the state, subsisting on public relief. If the dead colonists are added to another 6000 dead Amerindians, this means 9000 of the region's total population of 80,000 had perished, while other thousands of natives had been enslaved or driven from their former homes, and over half died thanks to starvation and other causes. All in all, Bourne argues, there was "no bloodier war in American history, in terms of proportionate populations." But if effective Indian power in southern New England had been destroyed, he argues that the English themselves had been "on the point of being driven into the sea," and that the Puritan theocracy was left "discredited as weak and inept," with its physical and psychic strength mortally wounded. "The once independent New England colonies," Bourne concludes, "their inability to govern their own affairs having been revealed, were tucked firmly under the wing of the British empire, not to be freed until the revolution of the next century."<sup>54</sup>

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R. Bourne, The Red King's Revolt, pp. 2-3, 36. W.V. Moore's earlier account gives much lower figures for the colonials losses: 600 killed, 13 towns razed, and 11 partially destroyed; Indian Wars of the United States, p. 128. This number is confirmed by E.B.

Apart from the terror and losses suffered, King Philip's War foreshadowed the later "frontier struggles" in other ways as well. In the 1670s -- as two decades later -- the "nature of Indian warfare, with its swift, silent attacks, its ambushes, its disregard of age and sex, and its deliberate cruelties, must have promoted a special terror and inspired a special hatred of the natives."<sup>55</sup> This is especially true of Mary Rowlandson's tale of abduction and captivity, which set the tone for the numerous similar accounts of suffering, often by women, that accompanied the future conflicts with the French and their Indian allies and, in time, became a staple of the literature of the American West.<sup>56</sup>

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Schultz and M.J. Tougas, King Philip's War, pp. 4-5, whose own estimate is between 600 and 800 as compared to 3000 natives. But as they make clear, this refers only to battle deaths and, when adjusted for population (which they estimate as 53,000 colonials and 20,000 Indians), they point out that it represents a level of losses twice that of the Civil War of 1861-1865, and seven times that of World War II. Although their total population figures again differ, R. Slotkin and J.K. Folsom, So Dreadful a Judgement, pp. 3-4, basically agree and maintain that one out of every sixteen males of military age were either killed in or died as a result of the conflict, "and many men, women and children were killed, were carried to captivity, or died of exposure as a result of Indian raids."

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Charles E. Clark, The Eastern Frontier: The Settlement of Northern New England, 1610-1763 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 70.

<sup>56</sup>

The story of Mary Rowlandson, with extracts from her own account is presented in Alice Dickinson, Taken by the Indians: True Tales of Captivity (New York: Franklin Watts; 1976), pp. 4-22, which contains five other accounts, of which two are by women; and in E.B. Schultz and M.J. Tougas, King Philip's War, pp. 342-355. Stuart Truman records another such tale, this time of a boy seized in the latter 1680s, in The Ordeal of John Gyles, Being an Account of his Odd Adventures, Strange Deliverances, etc. as a Slave of the Maliseets (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart; 1966), while Cotton Mather, in his Decennium Luctuosum (Sorrowful Decade), published in Boston in 1699, recorded the "Notable Exploit" of Hannah Dustan who, with another female prisoner, killed her Indian captors and escaped; see "The Captivity of Hannah Dustan" in Susan Castillo and Ivy Schweitzer, eds., The Literatures of Colonial America: An Anthology

But if emotions at times boiled over to cause localized massacres, and if some desperate English settlers did occasionally call for the extermination of their Native enemies, it was not until the mid-1700s that the English attempted to “initiate sustained, systematic programs to exterminate the Indians.”<sup>57</sup>

Another direct predecessor of those struggles is evident in the design and building of the so-called “garrison houses,” often referred to simply as “garrisons,” which would become the models for use in “frontier” defenses during 1689-1690.<sup>58</sup> At that time, wrote Massachusetts historian Thomas Hutchinson a few decades later, “in every frontier settlement there were ...garrison houses,” some of which had

a flankart at two opposite angles, others at each corner of the house; some houses [were] surrounded with pallisados, others, which were smaller, built with square timber, one piece laid horizontally upon another, and loop holes in every side of the house; and besides these, generally in any more considerable plantation, there was one principal garrison house, capable of containing soldiers sent for the defense of the plantation and the families near, whose houses were not fortified. It was thought justifiable and necessary, whatever the general rule of law might be, to erect such forts, castles, or bulwarks as these upon a man's own ground, without

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(Oxford: Blackwell; 2001), pp. 329-331. Meanwhile John Demos, The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story From Early America (New York: Random House-Vintage; 1994-1995), recounts and analyses the fates of prisoners captured at Deerfield in February 1704. The development of these themes, and their role in the frontier myth, are discussed in Annette Kolodny, The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina; 1984), pp. 17-34, 55-89, D.H. Murdoch, The American West, p. 34, and many of the other studies cited.

<sup>57</sup>

G.G. Plank, "Culture of Conquest," p. 2

<sup>58</sup>

For this usage see the numerous references throughout E.B. Schultz and M.J. Tougias, King Philip's War.



commission or special licence therefor."<sup>59</sup>

In practice, of course, the fate of these fortified and loopholed, or heavily shuttered houses had varied during the attacks of 1675-1676. The inhabitants of Hatfield, for instance, survived thanks to their newly built, ten-foot high stockade, but similar defenses at Northfield did not prevent the town's complete destruction during the first assault.<sup>60</sup> In general, however, these structures only fell when the raiders managed to surprise the settlers and associated garrisons, and at Lancaster the defenders – where the Rowlandson's garrison house and much of the village were razed in early February 1676 – the remaining five garrisons held out under relief arrived. Nonetheless, within a few weeks the fearful survivors, their provisions running low, petitioned the Massachusetts General Court for permission to abandon their plantation. "We are in danger eminent, the enemy laying above us, nay on both sides of us." And when the colonists did withdraw in late March, the Indian burned the town's remaining buildings.<sup>61</sup>

Although native resistance in the region's southeast had been destroyed, New

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T.F. Hutchinson, The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay, 2, p. 50, fn. In her article "Old York, a Forgotten Seaport" (1902), Pauline Carrington Bouve provides a photograph and detailed description of that settlement's McIntyre "garrison," discusses those in adjoining settlements, and their service at the time of Abenaki attacks of the late 1680s-early 1690s. This article is republished in Frank Oppel, comp., Tales of the New England Coast (Secaucus, NJ: Castle; 1985), pp. 44-51.

<sup>60</sup>

On Hatfield and Northfield, see E.B. Schultz and M.J. Tougias, King Philip's War, pp. 51, 180-183, and pp. 163-169, respectively.

<sup>61</sup>

Ibid., pp. 54-55, 185-191; D. Jaffee, People of the Wachusett, pp. 66-67 (quote cited on p. 67)...

Englanders remembered these lessons when they began rebuilding their shattered settlement networks, and simultaneously began to recognize the need of creating an effective military frontier.<sup>62</sup> Their confidence shaken, the Puritan leadership worried over the possibility of future Indian wars. Consequently, the Massachusetts General Court set out special requirements to be met by “all people who are intended to resettle the villages deserted in the late warr,” or to found new townships in western or northwestern Massachusetts. To begin with, such settlers had to site “their houses, so as to be more compact & live neerer together, for their better deffence against the Indians,”<sup>63</sup> Such measures, which often included the provision of garrison houses as potential strong-points, seemed ever more necessary in the face of a growing threat of a serious conflict with the French and their Indian allies, in part because of tensions in the Maine-Acadia region to the northeast, and in part in the south and southeast due to the dangerously increasing friction between Quebec and the Hurons on the one hand, and the Iroquois Confederacy and its backers in New York on the other.<sup>64</sup> It was therefore only natural that as pioneers pushed their settlements into these increasingly contested borderlands, “well beyond the hedge of the older core settlements,” they were often led

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<sup>62</sup>

Ibid., pp. 44-46; P.M. Malone, The Skulking Way of War, pp. 106-107, 120-122, 129; J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 55-56.

<sup>63</sup>

Quotes cited in D. Jaffe, People of the Wachusett, p. 76.

<sup>64</sup>

V.S. Barnes, Dominion of New England, pp. 214-216.

by proven “Indian fighters” like the celebrated Benjamin Church.<sup>65</sup>

Despite the claims of later historians that the war was waged “along a frontier<sup>66</sup> of three hundred miles, and to within twenty miles of Boston,” this use of the term is clearly anachronistic. True, apart from occasional legislation mentioning “frontier towns” taken during the General Court’s session of 1675-1676, consideration was given to building of a kind of Roman limes in the form of an eight-foot (2.5m) wooden stockade or stone wall. This was to run for some twelve miles (20km) from where the Charles River was navigable to the Concord at Billerica, on to the Merrimac, and then along that river down to the sea. By this means, the proposal read, “that whole tract will [be] environed, for the security & safety (vnder God) of the people, their houses, goods & cattle; from the rage and fury of the enemy.”<sup>67</sup> In the end this plan was abandoned, in

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D. Jaffe, People of the Wachusett, p. 74. Church’s own account of his experiences, Entertaining Passages Related to King Philip’s War, are reprinted in R. Slotkin and J.K. Folsom, eds., So Dreadful a Judgement, and as Diary of King Philip’s War, 1675-76 ed. Alan Simpson and Mary Simpson (Tiverton, RI: Lockswood; 1975).

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A.S. Barnes, A Brief History of the United States, p. 58. The term is occasionally used in a general way in contemporary documents, such as a letter that charges that after the Narragansett massacre, the New England authorities had called their army home leaving their frontiers “ungarrisoned.” But as the context makes clear, this refers to the individual garrison houses in scattered outlying settlements, not to a fixed border of some of some sort; Letter of R. Wharton to John Winsley, 10 February 1676, Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and West Indies, 1675-1676, 816..

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Quoted in F.J. Turner, “The First Official Frontier of the Massachusetts Bay,” p. 40, from the Massachusetts State Archives (Boston), 69, pp. 174-176. Discussions of this proposal are contained in documents 169a, 172a, 174, 175b, 180, and 183, and are discussed in J.D. Drake, King Philip’s War, p. 17, and in D.E. Leach, Flintlock and

part due to cost, and in part thanks to the objections of those whose homes lay outside this early model for a Bagdad “Green Zone!” Rather, the authorities preferred to rely on stockades and “garrison houses” for village defense, and to support the cheaper and more the offensive, non-European tactics of “search-and-destroy” raiding that aimed at both killing Amerindians directly in battle, as well as indirectly through the starvation caused by destroying their villages and crops. Despite the Puritans’ hatred of “the Wilderness” (see below) and fears of the moral depravity its “wilderness-temptations” fostered among those who learned its ways,<sup>68</sup> these tactics brought to the fore woodsmen like Church, among others, who laid a basis for the “ranger” tactics later used along the colonies’ frontiers with other native opponents and their French allies.<sup>69</sup> This, Turner

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Tomahawk, pp. 165-166.

<sup>68</sup>

The phrase “wilderness-temptations” is John Eliot’s, and is used in the discussion of Puritan suspicions of woodsmen and those who “went native” in Roderick Frazier Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New Haven and London: Yale University; 1982), pp. 31-32, and the comments in Richard Slotkin, Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1800 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 2000), pp. 77-78, 85-86.

<sup>69</sup>

This is some debate about the significance of the adoption of Amerindian tactics, as opposed to European military concepts, on the outcome of this conflict. For example, whereas the first is stressed in P.M. Malone, The Skulking Way of War and John Grenier, The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 2005), pp. 29-42, Guy Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness: The Triumph of European Warfare in the Colonial Northeast (Amherst and Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts; 2003), pp. 38-69, offers a useful corrective.

argues, was more appealing “to the frontiersmen of the time.”<sup>70</sup> In retrospect, others add that although never realised, the proposed wall reveals “the seeds of a new frontier mentality....Indians and the English would in the future would have a starker mental border between them.,”<sup>71</sup> or a spiritual rather than material wall.

Meanwhile, with their memories of the near disaster of Philip’s War still fresh, many New Englanders instead concentrated on colonizing the now abandoned Amerindian lands within the settlement “core,” rather than expanding farther into the more precarious continental interior or disputed Acadian borderlands in Maine. For if nothing else, King Philip’s War had “permanently ended joint occupation, produced an Algonquian diaspora out of southern New England, and cleared the way for the continued expansion of English settlement through the Wachusett.”<sup>72</sup> In this respect, it

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<sup>70</sup>

F.J. Turner, “The First Official Frontier of the Massachusetts Bay,” p. 40.

<sup>71</sup>

J.D. Drake, King Philip’s War, p. 174.

<sup>72</sup>

D. Jaffee, People of the Wachusetts, p. 68; W. Cronin, Changes in the Land, p. 103; H.S. Russell, A Long Deep Furrow, pp. 320-321; A. Taylor, American Colonies, pp. 202-203. These results are evident from the maps of New England in 1676 and 1760 in Stephen J. Hornsby, British Atlantic, American Frontier Spaces of Power in Early Modern British America (Hanover, NH: University of New England; 2005), pp. 130-131. Some “Praying Indians,” of course, did remain and in a letter of 18 June 1812 to Thomas Jefferson, John Adams recalled visiting a nearby native family on his boyhood rambles. Interestingly enough, this family’s boys, like other New Englanders, went to sea; Alan Pell Crawford, Twilight at Monticello: The Final Years of Thomas Jefferson (New York: Random House; 2008), p. 89.

can indeed be viewed as a “civil war”<sup>73</sup> that in its wake left the “wilderness” areas that had separated the river lines of settlement open to the “civilizing” influences of expanded Puritan pioneer farmers. And in their view, this was more than a victory of “civilization” over “savagery;” it was a victory for God. True, some Puritan New Englanders had sought to convert and so “save” the native inhabitants. Many others, however, envisaged the American continent and its “wilderness” as the realm of spiritual darkness, the abode of the Antichrist, and its natives as being hopelessly entrapped in the snares of Satan.<sup>74</sup> The war had been inevitable, Cotton Mather later explained, because

these parts were covered with nations of barbarous indians and infidels, in whom the prince of power of the air did work as a spirit; nor could it be expected that the nations of wretches, whose whole religion was the most

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In his King Philip’s War, pp. 2-3, 197-201, James Drake argues that thanks to the mixed settlement pattern and numerous interactions, this conflict should be regarded as a “civil war.”

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On New England concepts of the significance, and their fears of the great “Wilderness” and its Satanic inhabitants, see Edwin A. Churchill, “Mid-Seventeenth Century Maine: A World on the Edge,” in E. W. Baker, et al., American Beginnings, pp. 242-245; Steven D. Neuwirth, “The Images of Place: Puritans, Indians, and the Religious Significance of the New England Frontier,” American Art Journal, 18 (1986), pp. 47-51; J. Lapore, The Name of War, pp. 99-102; R.F. Nash, Wilderness in the American Mind, pp. 23-43; and R. Slotkin, Regeneration through Violence, chapters 2-6. For typical contemporary expressions of such views see Roger Williams letter to John Winthrop, c. 1636-1637, and Cotton Mather’s “The People of God,” in Edmund S. Morgan, ed., Puritan Political Ideas, 1558-1794 (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill; 1965), pp. 219-222, 233-249, while the ever-present dangers posed by Satan and his servants (or witches) to New Englanders was detailed in Increase Mather, A History of God’s Remarkable Providences in Colonial New England [1684] (Milwaukee, OR: Back Home Industries; 1997), especially chapter 5-8.

explicit sort of devil-worship, should not be acted by the devil to engage in some early and bloody action, for the extinction of a plantation so contrary to his interests, as that of New England was.<sup>75</sup>

Clearly then, as New Englanders turned their attention to taming and ploughing their newly gained lands between their earlier settlements -- what Archibald Lewis might call their "internal frontier" -- they had fully accepted the existence of a de facto spiritual border or frontier. Dubbed "the Hedge" by Cotton Mather, this separated the settlements of the Children of God from the Wilderness and those foolish souls who insisted on departing from the Institutions of God to risk perishing on "the Wrong Side of the Hedge."<sup>76</sup> The celebrated Indian fighter Benjamin Church adopted a similar image as a symbol for the barrier protecting Puritan civilization from the natural Wilderness, although this obviously resulted from human efforts rather than some heavenly decree. As he told readers of his memoirs, during the war New Englanders and their neighbours had been guaranteed "a great measure of Liberty and Peace by the hazardous Stations and Marches of those Engaged in Military Exercises, who were a Wall unto them on this

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Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana, Books I and II, ed. Kenneth Murdock with Elizabeth Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard-Belknap Press; 1977), II, pp. 479-480.

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Cotton Matther, The Short History of New England (Boston, 1694), pp. 42-43, as quoted in D. Jaffee, People of the Wachusetts, pp. 69-70. When Indian attacks were resumed, however, he revised his views to laud the settlements beyond "the Hedge" for their heroic role in defending the colony; Ibid., p. 72. The concept of "internal frontier," referring to an area of colonial settlement within the accepted boundaries of a region, is outlined in Archibald R. Lewis, "The Closing of the Medieval Frontier, 1250 to 1350," Speculum, 33 (1958), pp. 477-483.

side and on that side.”<sup>77</sup>

As these comments suggests, the concept of a de facto “frontier” was forming both in the minds of New Englanders and taking shape in the borderlands separating them from the wilderness and more distant native polities. When discussing the Massachusetts Bay colony, Turner rightly recognizes that as just demonstrated, this distinction only became possible when King Philip’s War put an end to the mixed Anglo-Native occupation of the central region of settlement, and so left a relatively homogeneous area of colonial townships. Put differently, it was only in the latter 1670s that there appeared a border (hedge) that can be considered as the edge of westward expansion. Thereafter, Turner argues, the “settler on the outskirts of Puritan civilization took up the task of bearing the brunt of attack and pushing forward the line of advance ... into the wilderness,” a process that replicated itself stage by stage across the continent. Yet if it is also true that in “American thought and speech the term ‘frontier’ has come to mean the edge of settlement , rather than, as in Europe, the political boundary,” Turner’s conclusion – that as early as 1690 “it was already evident that the frontier of settlement and the frontier of military defense were coinciding”<sup>78</sup> – is more debatable. The problem, however, is that

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<sup>77</sup>

B. Church, Entertaining Passages, in R. Slotkin and J.K. Folsom, So Dreadful a Judgement, pp. 371-372.

<sup>78</sup>

F.J. Turner, “The First Official Frontier of the Massachusetts Bay,” pp. 40-41, in which he adds that “the military frontier ceased to be thought of as the Atlantic coast, but as a moving line bounding the un-won wilderness.” But his argument that the extensive and often vaguely defined boundaries in the colonial charters made any “fortified boundary” (or more correctly “military frontier”) impossible is less self-evident.



while the colonists did not regularly think and speak of a “frontier” in the sense he suggests, they did in fact begin using the term in European military sense, as a defensive line separating them from the the uncivilised “savages” who inhabited the wilderness. True, their former native opponents were now vanquished and living as exiles in regions far distant from their abandoned homes, and so in themselves hardly posed a serious cross-border military threat to the core of the shaken but victorious New Englander settlements. But the merging of the interests of these Amerindian refugees with those of their undefeated brothers, as well as with those of a more ambitious and aggressive French leadership in Quebec and, to a lesser extent in Acadia, began to move the creation of a military frontier the top of the colonial agenda.

### **Birth of the Tidewater Military Frontier**

Before turning to the Northeast it is worth noting Turner’s discussion of what he calls the “Old West.” This he defined as “a western area intermediate between the coastal colonial settlements of the seventeenth century and the trans-Alleghany settlements of the latter portion of the eighteenth century, which he distinguished from “the oldest West” or “the Atlantic coast.” He argues that “it took a century of Indian fighting and forest felling for the colonial settlements to expand into the interior to a distance of about a hundred miles from the coast,” and sets out “to isolate and discuss” this area – geographically defined as “the back country of New England, the Mohawk Valley, the Great Valley of Pennsylvania, the Shenandoah Valley, and the Piedmont” – under the name of the “Old West,” which chronologically involves “the period from about 1676 to

1763.” Or put differently, Turner believed that within this region and time-frame he found the seeds of his own “West” and its “frontier.”<sup>79</sup> But if, as demonstrated above, the end of King Philip’s War in 1676 arguably marks the opening of such a frontier in New England, the significance of this dating is much less obvious with regard to the parallel Susquehannock War and its impact on the Old Dominion of Virginia.

Unlike Massachusetts, colonists there were from the first faced with Amerindian attacks and so immediately forced to adopt their own Old World defensive systems to their needs. This means that if the European-style “military frontier” was unsuited to conditions in New England before 1676, the initial situation was somewhat different along the inland bounds of Tidewater Virginia. There, despite the efforts of the famed Pocahontas and other examples of settler-Powhatan accommodation and even cooperation, the colonists’ relations with the aboriginal inhabitants were from the first unstable, and more frequently than not, marked by outright hostility.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, as J.

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Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Old West,” in F.J. Turner, The Frontier in American History, pp. 67-68.

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The background to the expedition, along with the founding and early days of Jamestown are the subject of a host of works. Representative recent examples used in this study include Ted Morgan, Wilderness At Dawn: The Settling of the North American Continent (New York: Simon and Schuster; 1993), pp. 109-120; James Horn, “Tobacco Colonies: The Shaping of English Society in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake,” in Nicholas Canny, ed., The Oxford History of the British Empire, 1: The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Enterprise to the Close of the Seventeenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University; 1998), pp.170-176; and William M. Kelso, Jamestown: The Buried Truth (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia; 2006). Other more focused and detailed histories include David A. Price, Love and Hate in Jamestown: John Smith, Pocahontas and the Heart of a New Nation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 2003); Camilla

Leitch Wright, Jr. points out, the initial colony was virtually a “a military outpost,” and professional soldiers often served as governors during its early decades. Furthermore, in hostilities that “persisted throughout the seventeenth century,” the enemies almost always were not England’s Spanish, French and Dutch rivals, but the region’s original Amerindian inhabitants. “Intervals of peace were infrequent,” he tells us, and

Occasionally full-scale Indian wars erupted: the 1622 and 1642 massacres, Colonel Edward Hill’s expedition against the Ricahecrians in 1656, and Nathaniel Bacon’s campaigns in 1676. More often than not conflicts were limited and hardly, if at all, noticed by posterity. For the first seven years intermittent fighting occurred. Arrows had greeted the Jamestown settlers when they first arrived in Chesapeake Bay; not until Pocahontas’s marriage to Rolfe was there a semblance of peace. Even afterward, small parties of English soldiers continued to go out against Powhatan’s enemies, if not his subjects.<sup>81</sup>

Given this context, it is hardly surprising that the colonists made wide use of forts and other defensive works. Apart from Fort Raleigh that had been erected 1585 for the lost colony on Roanoke Island,<sup>82</sup> Virginia’s first fort was built by the settlers who landed

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Townsend, Pocahontas and the Powhatan Dilemma: An American Portrait (New York: Hill and Wang; 2004); and most recently, both Kieran Doherty, Sea Venture: Shipwreck, Survival, and the Salvation of the First English Colony in the New World. (New York: St. Martin’s Press; 2007) and Benjamin Wooley, Savage Kingdom: The True Story of Jamestown, 1607, and the Settlement of America (New York: HarperCollins; 2007).

<sup>81</sup>

J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew: American Indians in the Old South, new intro. James H. Merrell (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska-Bison Books; 1999), Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>82</sup>

The small Roanoke earthworks are described in J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 39-40.

at Jamestown in 1607. Under direction of the professional soldier John Smith, they immediately set about constructing a triangular, high stockade with three rounded bastions for the available cannon. The fifteen-foot (4.5m) high stockade was backed by earth and completely surrounded by a dry ditch, which surrounded the settlement, the main entry to which was on the 420-foot (126m) wall facing the river. Although it largely provided protection against the local native inhabitants, Jamestown's leaders were at the time more concerned about possible naval attacks by the Spanish, French and subsequently the Dutch, and the main position was soon supported to the east by the Hog Island Fort. Situated on the river's south side, this again had a dual purpose: apart from blocking a possible Spanish approach up river, this work was intended to protect a hog-farm from the local Powhatans as well. Another defensive position appeared in 1609, in the form the small Smith's Fort (named after John Smith) on the James River's south side, sited some two miles (5km) up a creek near today's Surrey and intended to protect John Rolfe's plantation. Construction began as well on Fort Algernon (after 1727 Fort George) at Point Comfort on Hampton Roads, at the mouth of the James River.

Beginning as an earthworks, by 1611 this triangular structure soon comprised a stockade, magazine, barracks, and seven heavy guns, and by 1612 it was protected in its rear from attacks by Amerindians and possible enemy landing parties by the two small stockades - Fort Charles and Fort Henry, on Hampton Creek (near today's Hampton). Other identified works of this period include Fort Crawford, built across the James River from Hog Island in 1610, and Fort Wolstenholme, sited to protect the settlement of Martin's

Hundred on that river's south shore of near its mouth in 1622.<sup>83</sup>

During these same early years some effort was made as well to protect the colony from Powhatan attacks from up river, and to control its navigation inland. As early as 1609 Smith sent Captain Francis West upstream to build Fort West on an island near the Falls (present-day Richmond). At this time, however, Ameindian resistance still was powerful enough to prevent this site from being permanently occupied until 1611. Then another professional soldier, Sir Thomas Dale, sent a force of several hundred men back up river to establish the town of Henrico on the site of an Indian village, some ten miles from the present Richmond. Its security was provided on the spot by Fort Charity, supported by four other nearby works. Presumably Dale's intention was to move the main colony inland from dismal and swampy Jamestown but, in the event, this move, too, was forestalled when Herico was utterly destroyed by the Powhatans in 1622. Consequently, the initial settlement in Virginia remained a fortified coastal bridgehead, but one that in time would serve as the base for an interior "military frontier." Nonetheless, throughout the next two centuries this colony's rulers also had to take repeated steps to maintain, rebuild and augment the defenses along the "coastal frontier" while simultaneously responding to appeals for protection from settlers on their inland

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The other two walls of Fort James' defensive triangle were 300-feet (90m) each in length. After the original fort burned down in 1608, it was rebuilt, but later later permitted to fall into ruins. In 1672, as part of the program for defenses against the Dutch, it was replaced by a brick fort; *Ibid.*, pp. 41-43; W.M. Kelso, Jamestown: The Buried Truth, pp. 16-18, 24-26, 55-115, 208-210.

borders.<sup>84</sup> Given their wood construction, the forts needed constant repairs to keep them from ruin, and were also subject to fires as well. Fort Algernon at Point Comfort, for example, burned to the ground in early 1612, was rebuilt in that May, but then deteriorated (along with its satellite stockades) so as to become completely useless. In 1631 new works were erected on this site, and additional forts soon followed, all paid for by fees levied on passing ships as long as they retained their defensive value. Another large-scale rebuilding program was implemented during the Dutch Wars of the 1660s-early 1670s, but by 1700 most of Virginia's coastal works were in ruins as a new round of imperial wars necessitated new fortifications, such as Fort George, raised in 1727 at Point Comfort. Yet a hurricane destroyed this installation in 1747 and Virginia's coast was left virtually defenseless until the end of the American Revolution<sup>85</sup>.

Inland, the development of tobacco as a commercial crop had meanwhile brought growing settler pressure on the Powhatans' farming lands and in March 1622, they launched a round of well-coordinated surprise attacks aimed at expelling the invaders,

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Thanks to the increasing wealth brought to Virginia from the tobacco plantations, the colony remained a tempting prize for England's enemies throughout the 1600s, and coastal defence often consumed resources which the settlers in the interior would believed would be better spent on their protection; on the naval issue see I.K. Steele, Warpaths, pp. 50-51.

85

J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 44-45. The extensive, and expensive, building program undertaken to meet the Dutch threat in the early 1670s, on the eve of the Susquehanna War, is detailed in Donald G. Shomette and Robert D. Haslach, Raid on America: The Dutch Naval Campaign of 1672-1674 (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina; 1988), pp. 124-138.

and which succeeded in killing at least a quarter of the settlers. Over the next year, and in spite of ten major counter-raids, launched with the aid of Amerindian guides and allies against the Powhatan villages as well as cornfields, as well as the arrival of aid from home, the surviving colonists were forced to live under siege conditions in eight strongholds along the James River. Enraged, the desperate English “resorted to duplicity”<sup>86</sup> and abandoned all accepted rules of civilized warfare within the Tidewater: agreements and treaties were regarded simply as a way of recovering white prisoners, or of “lulling savages into a false sense of security;” Powhatan envoys were murdered while celebrating successful negotiations for future “friendship;” unfortunate native visitors were killed outright, imprisoned or used as forced labour; and as, in Massachusetts, English tactics increasingly focused on destroying their opponents’ villages, along with the crops and fishing weirs upon which they depended for survival.<sup>87</sup>

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I.K. Steele, Warpaths, pp. 46-47; William L. Shea, The Virginia Militia in the Seventeenth Century (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University; 1983), pp. 27-42. The generally accepted figure is that of a settler population of some 1200, the Powhatans succeeded in killing 347 at 31 sites in their initial assault; T. Morgan, Wilderness at Dawn, p. 130, and James Deetz, Flowerdew Hundred: The Archaeology of a Virginia Plantation, 1619-1864 (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia; 1993), p. 46.

87

J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, pp. 77-81; H.C. Rountree, Pocahontas’s People, pp. 75-81; T. Morgan, Wilderness at Dawn, pp. 11-32; and Alden T. Vaughan, “‘Expulsion of the Salvages:’ English Policy and the Virginia Massacre of 1622.” The William and Mary Quarterly. 3<sup>rd</sup> Series. 35 (1973), pp. 57-84. This violent reaction is played down in studies like Peter Wallenstein’s Cradle of America, pp. 22-25, who mentions only the uprising or “massacre” of 1622, pp. 22-25. More realistic views of the violence involved are argued in I.K. Steele, Warpaths, pp.37-48; A. Taylor, American Colonies, pp. 125-135; Daniel K. Richter, Facing East From Indian Country: A Native History of Early America (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 2001), pp. 70-

Proposed by the planter John Martin, this last strategy was formally adopted by the Virginia Council in June 1622 with the clear goal of effectively clearing the Tidewater's Lower Peninsula of its aboriginal inhabitants. Thereafter, special companies of militiamen were formed for "carrying corn," which meant the destruction of Powhatan crops.<sup>88</sup>

Despite a decisive English victory in July 1624, the year in which Virginia became a royal colony, intermittent hostilities dragged on for another eight years with increasing numbers of Powhatans dying at the soldiers' hands, perishing from disease and hunger, or being sold into slavery. As for the colonists, if they acquired further lands as a result, their militia service hindered the growth of tobacco crops and the colony's finances suffered accordingly.<sup>89</sup> In the end, in 1632, both sides therefore finally agreed to a fragile and frequently violated truce. In accord with its terms the English received large territorial concessions that permitted their settlements to expand northwards up

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78; Helen C. Rountree, Pocahontas's People: The Powhattan Indians of Virginia Through Four Centuries (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 1990, 1996), pp. 29-81, and in the works on the colony's founding cited above.

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John Grenier, The First Way of War, p. 24.

<sup>89</sup>

The development of tobacco as the staple of the Jamestown colonists is briefly recounted in T. Morgan, Wilderness at Dawn, pp.120-129; A. Taylor, American Colonies, pp. 133-134; James Horn, "Tobacco Colonies," pp. 183-185; and more extensively in the well-documented "Tobacco Plantations in the Chesapeake," in S.J. Hornsby, British Atlantic, American Frontier, pp. 88-111.



Chesapeake Bay, as well as along the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers.<sup>90</sup> Another major and lasting result of these events was tendency, again as in Massachusetts after 1676, for the colonists to seek to draw strict boundaries between themselves and their native neighbours. With the formal end of the first Powhatan War they therefore took steps to avoid a repetition of the disaster of 1622 by creating a defensive military frontier. This took the form of a wall cutting the lower (Jamestown) part of the Peninsula (some 300,000 acres) off from the rest of the mainland, and excluding all Amerindians. This structure took the form of a six-mile (9.6km) ditch, backed by a wooden stockade that stretched directly, regardless of the terrain, from College Creek near Jamestown on the James River, through the Middle Plantation (later Williamsburg), and on to Fort Chiskiack at Queen's Creek on the York. This was to be extended to include additional aboriginal land as acquired and in the event, for this reason and the fact that the stockade deteriorated like the wooden works along the coast, the wall had to be rebuilt in 1644. Taken with the coastal forts, this stockade converted the colony into a virtual place d'armes and, in the process, ensured an almost complete separation of the competing "cultures with palisades, dangerous no-man's lands, and persistent hatreds between them."<sup>91</sup>

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A. Taylor, American Colonies, p. 135. Events during the period 1623-1632 remain cloudy but what is known is recounted in J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, pp. 77-85, and H.C. Rountree, Pocahontas's People, pp. 74-81.

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I.K. Steele, Warpaths, p. 47. Archaeological excavation of the wall's ruins began in the 1990s, but the details above reflect the preliminary results as reported in J.E. Kaufmann

Throughout the 1630s and early 1640s the uneasy peace held. Yet tensions continued to mount and the English strictly limited contacts between the colonists and the Powhatans. Unfortunately for the latter, both their numbers and power declined still further due to disease, malnutrition and colonist harassment. Meanwhile, the settler population grew rapidly (to c. 10,000 in 1644) and this, along the rapid exhaustion of older fields, thanks to the cultivation of tobacco, raised the pressure to acquire additional native lands for new farms and plantations. The English, having reorganized the colony into counties in 1634, achieved their aim through a variety of means – purchase, fraud, forcible seizures and, at times, even by outright gift. As a result, during the latter 1630s and early 1640s their settlements advanced beyond the palisade-wall, up the James River and along the Eastern Shore. By 1640 they had begun to claim “empty” lands to the York River and near Mobjack Bay, by 1642 they were on the Rappahannock River, and by 1643 on the Potomac.<sup>92</sup> As the native inhabitants withdrew (or were pushed) towards the “Fall Line,” the highest point of navigation on the rivers flowing from the mountains and Piedmont to the sea, Virginian expansion was checked only when Lord Calvert founded Fort St. Mary’s City (to create Catholic Maryland) in 1634, ejected them from

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and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp.43-44. The ditch appears to have been 3-4 feet wide, ditched only 1-1.5 feet (0.35-0.52m) deep. On the separation of cultures also see the comments in J.L. Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, pp. 77-78, on the wall, p. 83.

<sup>92</sup>

H.C. Rountree, Pocahontas’s People, pp. 81-84, and more briefly, in J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, pp. 84-85.

Fort Kent (on Kent Island) in 1635, and so blocked their northward further advance.<sup>93</sup>

Despite this extension of English settlement, the formal military frontier or wall remained in place, and no new official fortifications were built. In part this reflected the seeming passivity of the Powhatan and other native groups, and in part a reliance on private enterprise. In this last regard, the new settler-proprietors often consolidated their hold on their farms and plantations by constructing “a number of stockades and blockhouses..., most of which were not very impressive for the seventeenth century.”<sup>94</sup> Indeed, in the wake of the first Powhatan War (that is, during 1623-1624), the authorities issued orders demanding the fortification of some settlements and plantation houses. In fact, some may have been fortified even before the outbreak of hostilities in 1622. For example, some suggest that the loss of only six people at Flowerdew Hundred, as compared to the twenty at adjacent Weyanoke or seventy-eight at Martin’s Hundred below Jamestown, reflects the presence of heavy defenses, traces of which are revealed by archaeology. But if it remains debatable whether or not the six cannon (later 12) reported at Flowerdew in 1625 were mounted earlier, it is clear that some plantations built works much more extensive than the above-quoted comment suggests. Aside from traces of trenches and palisades, and possibly a bastion, discovered at Flowerdew

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Intracolony conflicts and tensions, in part reflecting religious difference, continued over the next two to three decades. The founding and defence of Maryland is briefly discussed in J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 46-47; A. Taylor, American Colonies, pp. 136-137; and T. Morgan, Wilderness at Dawn, pp. 237-247.

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J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 45-46.

Hundred,<sup>95</sup> this is demonstrated by the works protecting the Clifts Plantation. There a ditch and stockade formed a defensive enclosure for a rectangular earthfast house, further reinforced by two corner bastions.<sup>96</sup> While the defensive structures thrown up in the interior during the decade 1634-1644 may well have been less elaborate and archaeologically durable, it is striking that the colony's authorities already seemingly accepted that with the Jamestown base secure, these widely diverse fortified plantations and settlements (or "co-habitations," as they were later called) were a suitable means for holding their rapidly expanding and still sparsely settled territories.

In 1644 the resentful but weakened Powhatan made one final major attempt to stem the colonist tide. Possibly encouraged by the rivalry between Maryland and Virginia, in that April they turned on their tormentors and launched another coordinated surprise strike against the settlers. Since those in the Lower Peninsula remained relatively secure, it was the settlements lying outside the palisade-wall, and those on the southern edge of settlement, that bore the brunt. This attack succeeded in killing some 500 colonists<sup>97</sup> but, since the colony's base stayed intact, the end result was a second, bitter war that lasted

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J. Deetz, Flowerdew Hundred, pp. 20-24, 48-50, 161-162. The "compound" found there, be it a fort or otherwise, is described on pp.20-24, 25-35, 40-42, with a ground plan (p. 27).

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-19, 39. These features are clear on the accompanying ground plan (p. 18).

<sup>97</sup>

I.K. Steele, Warpaths, p. 48, notes that more English lives were lost in this "single blow" than in 1622. This is quantitatively correct, but the figure represents a much smaller proportion of the total settler population.

until 1646.<sup>98</sup> The English opened their counteroffensive when Governor William Berkeley launched two diversionary attacks along the James River while his main force (300 armoured musketeers) advanced up the York River against the Amerindian heartland. Finding this abandoned, they destroyed both habitations and cornfields, and then laid “claim” to the deserted lands. Fighting continued throughout 1645 as the aged and feeble paramount chief Opechancanough escaped another English trap disguised as “negotiations.” Then, in the spring 1646, he was captured in his litter by a special expedition of sixty mounted militiamen led by Berkeley himself, and thrown into a Jamestown prison, where he was murdered. With this the Powhatan resistance collapsed and in that October his successor signed a peace treaty with the English. By its terms the remaining Powhatan (the Pamunkey) were to cede all territory south of the York, and refrain from entering it on pain of death; to pay an annual tribute of twenty beaverskins to show they had accepted English sovereignty over their own remaining lands; to return all captive settlers as well as “all negroes and guns;” and to confine their trade to specified forts.<sup>99</sup>

Three aspects of this conflict and settlement are of particular importance with regard to the future of military frontiers in Virginia in particular and North America in general.

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The Powhatans’ offensive of 1644 and final defeat is chronicled in I.K. Steele, Warpaths, pp. 47-49; J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, pp. 85-86; and in greater detail, in Helen C. Rountree, Pocahontas’s People, pp. 84-88.

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Ibid., p. 87; I.K. Steele, Warpaths, p. 49.

Firstly, in 1645 the colony's authorities had recognized the necessity of building real forts in order to consolidate their hold on their newly seized aboriginal lands, and to serve as bases for future raids against their Amerindian enemies. As a result of this program, four new forts were built: in 1645, Fort Charles at the falls of the James, near the site of the earlier Fort West, Lenexa and the later Richmond; Fort Royal at Pamunkey, on the Mattaponi River near today's West Point, opposite Tottopotomoy Creek in King William County; a second Fort James at the Ridge of Chickahominy (Chiquohomine) River, west of Diascund Creek" near the present Petersburg; and finally, in 1646, Fort Henry, built by Captain Abraham Wood and garrisoned by ten soldiers at the Appomattox River falls in 1646.<sup>100</sup> All were of earth and wood construction, which meant that they deteriorated rapidly in the humid climatic conditions and so required regular repair and maintenance. In order to avoid additional public expenditures for this purpose, the authorities turned them over, along with additional lands, to private entrepreneurs at the conclusion of hostilities. Furthermore, the value of Fort Royal and Fort Henry was increased by provisions of the peace treaty of 1646 that made them the only points of entry into the colony for Indians, messengers as well as traders, who were henceforth required to wear striped coats, obtained at these posts, on pain of death. Ironically, it was Pocahontas' son Thomas Rolfe who became the

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Using Fort Henry as a base, Wood launched a number of exploratory expeditions across the Fall Line into Appalachia; S.B. Drake, A History of Appalachia, pp. 27-28.

proprietor of Fort James, along with an added 125 acres.<sup>101</sup>

In this manner the Old Dominion's formal military frontier effectively moved to the Fall Line with the new "string of forts dividing the two races." Of course, "there was never much doubt that parties of enemy warriors, if they had a mind to, could slip through the gaps."<sup>102</sup> Even if not conceived as such at the time, an answer to this problem -- and the second major contribution to the formation of the continent's military frontiers -- also had emerged during the second Powhatan War in the form of rangers. The first such unit was raised in 1645, in response to the frustration caused by the failure of raids and duplicity to smash the Amerindian resistance, and to the high costs entailed in garrisoning the new forts with militiamen. This was "a force of paid volunteer 'rangers' who contracted to defend the colony for a year." If in some ways these can be seen as the direct descendants of the crop destruction units formed after 1622, this decision can be seen as "introducing specialized forces that the developing tobacco economy was expected to support."<sup>103</sup> As the capture of Opechancanough in 1646 demonstrates, Virginia's rangers, unlike those formed in New England by Benjamin Church and others, were mounted. For this reason one recent admirer of

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In addition, any colonist found harboring a native without official permission also was subject to execution; Ibid., where Fort Royal is identified as Fort Loyal; H.C. Rountree, Pocahontas's People, pp. 86-87; J.F. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, p. 44.

102

J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, pp. 83-84.

103

I.K. Steele, Warpaths, p. 49.

Church argues that those of Virginia were not true rangers who learned “to fight like Indians from Indians,” but instead had been modeled on the dragoons found in European cavalry forces. He admits, however, that these Southern rangers “stand as another example of how Englishmen could adapt Old World practices to New World conditions;” that they may well have “needed horses to cover the more open areas of the Piedmont;” that Southerners remained committed to the model of mounted rangers as they pushed into Kentucky, Tennessee and the Old Southwest; and that by “the 1810s, the mounted rangers were the most sought-after troops for killing the Indians of the Transappalachian West.”<sup>104</sup> In 1646, however, this institution had yet to establish itself and with the coming of peace, the rangers were disbanded. Thereafter, the tasks of maintaining and garrisoning the forts were left to their proprietors; the functions of the forts themselves were often supplemented, and in time even assumed, by “fortified plantations;” and when necessary, that of patrolling or “ranging” in the gaps, and so of protecting those forts, was fulfilled by hired groups of friendly Amerindians.<sup>105</sup>

This last raises the third major trend revealed by the treaty of 1646. This is the fact that since its terms transformed the remaining Powhatans into subjects of the Crown, the latter’s colonial governors and their administrations became responsible for protecting both them and their recognized rights, however curtailed. So if the peace of 1646 led to a

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<sup>104</sup>

J. Grenier, The First Way of War, pp. 35-36.

<sup>105</sup>

J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, pp. 84-86.



form of de facto apartheid and banned Amerindians from entering the colony's territory, it also prohibited – with important exceptions – the colonists from trespassing on Powhatan lands north of the York River, or from cutting timber there without the governor's explicit permission. True, the same session of the Virginian General Assembly that ratified treaty almost immediately passed a second act that restricted this provision until such time as a “further order” reversed this situation, and also carefully avoided providing definitive geographical boundaries for the Powhatan territory. It therefore is hard not to agree with Helen Rountree that this settlement was not, “in effect, an agreement among the English that they would move northward again when Indian rancor over the recent war had diminished, and that any protests made later by the nonliterate Powhatans would be pushed aside.”<sup>106</sup> In any event, by 1650 Virginia's Amerindians “had been assigned to reservations at the rate of fifty acres per bowman, an allotment “adequate for a plowman, but not for a hunter,”<sup>107</sup> and the Virginians had achieved a state of dominance and separation throughout the entire Tidewater that would elude their compatriots in Massachusetts for another quarter century.

With the Powhatans' empire decisively broken, English expansion within in the Tidewater took place in virtual power vacuum and rather than their inland borders, the

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<sup>106</sup>

H.C. Rountree, Pocahontas's People, pp. 87-88.

<sup>107</sup>

I.K. Steele, Warpaths, p. 49.

attention of the colony's defence planners focused on the coast.<sup>108</sup> Fortunately for Governor Berkeley and his associates, the rise of the Dutch threat sea was paralleled by a lack of serious hostilities in the interior. When settlers did encounter opposition, as they did from the Rappahannock in 1655, their own militia now proved sufficient to overawe the natives. Yet its confrontation with the mysterious Richahecrians, a group of some six to seven hundred otherwise unidentified warriors who suddenly appeared and settled above the James River falls in 1656, ended very differently. On this occasion the Virginia Assembly ordered Colonel Edward Hill to take 100 militiamen with another 100 Powhatan-Pamunkey to warn off the newcomers, "without making warr if it may be." Once again, however, the English used the negotiations to murder five Richahecrian chiefs. This provoked a pitched battle during the well-armed Amerindians routed and disgraced the panicked militia and killed most of their Pamunkey allies, their leader included. This was the colony's only major battle with Amerindians in the decades 1645-1745 and fortunately for the Virginians, the Richahecrians evaporated as suddenly as they had appeared. Even so, both the possible dangers lurking beyond the Fall Line, and the militia's doubtful military value, were now abundantly evident.<sup>109</sup>

This likely explains the sudden, renewed interest in reinforcing the loose military

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Ibid., pp. 50-51; W.L. Shea, The Virginia Militia in the Seventeenth Century, pp. 89-96; D.G. Shomette and R.D. Haslach, Raid on America, chapters 10-11.

109

I.K. Steele, Warpaths, pp. 51-52; J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, pp. 87-88.

frontier established along the Fall Line by the string of five forts in 1645-1646. By the mid-1650s, when heat and humidity were reducing many wooden works to ruin, two new major forts were added to that earlier roster. The first, Fort Mattapony, was the work of Edward Digges, a future provincial governor. Sited some twenty miles (32km) up the Mattaponi River from Fort Royal, it clearly was intended as a frontier post to guard against new challenges. The same was true of the second, Fort Manaskin, built on the Panunkey River in 1660 and possibly garrisoned by allied Indians.<sup>110</sup> In addition, the Ricahecrian affair also underlines the new difficulties created for the Crown's representatives by the collapse of the Powhatans who earlier had limited the colony's growth, but simultaneously served as a buffer insulating it from external attackers. This last danger, of course, had fluctuated over time but by the 1670s, the outlying settlers along the Fall Line faced a range of possible aboriginal friends and enemies. These included the expanding Westo renegades to the south, with whom some Virginian merchants conducted a profitable trade, and the Susquehannocks to the north. Recently defeated by the Iroquois, these nonetheless remained powerful and now were resettled by the officials of nearby Maryland in the refurbished Piscataway Fort, originally built by Europeans on the Potomac in the 1640s.<sup>111</sup>

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J.F. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, p. 44.

<sup>111</sup>

On this background see I.K. Steele, Warpaths, pp. 51-53; Francis Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire: The Covenant Chain Confederation of Indian Tribes with English Colonies from Its Beginnings to the Lancaster Treaty of 1744 (New York: W.W. Norton; 1984), pp. 127-130, 139-141; The situation to the immediate south of Virginia is detailed in Verner W. Crane, The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732, new introduction

In this situation the Crown's obligations to protect the Powhatans, assumed in accord with the treaty of 1646, was in practice extended, willy-nilly, to a new range of other neighbouring Amerindian groups. In their concern for the colony's security, Governors Berkeley and his successors -- like other administrators of frontier zones in other places and times -- had little choice but to find new Amerindian allies, or at least neutrals, to act as frontier buffers.<sup>112</sup> This often placed colonial governors in Virginia and elsewhere in the unenviable position of risking public unpopularity, and even censure, for efforts to retain such allies' friendship, or attempts to prevent a border conflict through attempts to restrain their own borderers and, at times, even by direct intervention to defend the colonists' intended native victims. As Governor Alexander Spotswood later explained: "A governor of Virginia has to steer between Scylla and Charybdis, either an Indian or a civil war" launched by angry and land-hungry settlers. This plaint was echoed by numerous British and American border officials, both before and later.<sup>113</sup>

Over the three decade since the Second Powhatan War, Virginia's total population continued to rise. By 1675 it probably numbered about 44,000, of whom roughly 38,000 were Europeans in origin or by descent, and only some 3500 Amerindian. Such figures

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Steven C. Hahn (Reissue: Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama; 2004), pp. 3-21.

<sup>112</sup>

P. Wallenstein, Cradle of America, pp. 49, 51, notes that efforts at exploring Appalachia and beyond were in part at least spurred by official policy that "sought to establish a buffer zone in the west to protect the area east of the Blue Ridge." The state of knowledge of the Piedmont is illustrated by John Farrar's map in Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>113</sup>

Quoted by D.K. Richter, Facing East From Indian Country, p. 108. Spotswood served as governor of Virginia from 1710 to 1722.

were unknown at the time but it is indeed difficult, as Ian Steele remarks, “to appreciate subsequent white fears of annihilation.”<sup>114</sup> Although most scholars date settlement of the Piedmont “backcountry” from the arrival of the Scots-Irish after the latter 1720s, by 1670 explorers, traders and perhaps even a few of the poorer but more adventuresome colonists had already had begun pushing beyond the boundary of the “Fall Line.”<sup>115</sup> In any case, by that date the settlers along that border already were displaying signs of a radical interpretation of “hegemonic liberty” that found expression in the independent, not to say near anarchic, spirit that is commonly associated with the later pioneers of the Appalachian and Trans-Appalachian “frontiers.”<sup>116</sup> These Fall Line settlers also shared the latter’s attitudes to the Amerindians, attitudes in which disregard for the aborigines’ rights often were mixed with fear and indeed, outright hatred for all Amerindians. This complicated the Crown authorities’ task since the border settlers, lacking a shared strategic vision, frequently misunderstood their rulers’ Indian policies, resented attempts to draw distinctions between “friendlies” and “hostiles,” and accused the government of ignoring the settlers’ complaints for fear of endangering favourable trading relations that

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114

I.K. Steele, Warpaths, p. 49. A map showing the pattern of settlements in Virginia is available in S.J. Hornsby, British Atlantic, American Frontier, p. 92.

115

R.B. Drake, A History of Appalachia, pp. 27-29; P. Wallenstein, Cradle of America, pp. 51-52. Until the 1720s, however, settlers seeking fresh land almost invariably pushed south and southwest into the Carolinas, and not westward.

116

The Virginian concept of “hegemonic liberty,” without which Britons were reduced to slavery, is discussed in D.H. Fischer, Albion’s Seed, pp. 410-418.

enriched the colonial elite. Then in 1670, a new property qualification deprived many of the poorer colonists of the right to vote to the Burgesses (Virginia's lower house) on the grounds that freedmen without land, "haveing little interest in the country, doe oftner make tumults at the election to the disturbance of his majesties peace, then by their discretions in their votes provide for the conservasion thereof."<sup>117</sup> For all these reasons, beneath a relatively peaceful surface, Virginia remained plagued by social discontent and a simmering resentment of the planter and official elite felt by the newer and poorer settlers, many of whom had arrived as indentured servants. This situation then became all the more dangerous due to a sharp rise in the tax levies required to finance the raising of troops and building of coastal defences aimed against the Dutch, at a time when firearms had proliferated in the upcountry woodlands among both the settlers and their Amerindian neighbours, the rival contenders for power beyond the Fall Line.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup>

Quoted in D. Horowitz, The First Frontier, p. 103.

<sup>118</sup>

A. Taylor, American Colonies, pp. 139-148. Useful discussions of the various social-political and economic aspects of Virginia at this time are James Horn, "Tobacco Colonies," pp. 176-183, 185-191, his full-scale study Adapting to a New World: English Society in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina; 1994), as well as his "Servant Emigration to the Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century," in Thad W. Tate and David L. Ammerman, eds., The Chesapeake in the Seventeenth Century: Essays on Anglo-American Society (New York and London: W.W. Norton; 1979), pp. 51-96; P. Wallenstein, Cradle of America, pp. 32-46; and D.B. Rutman and A.H. Rutman, A Place in Time: Middlesex County, Virginia, 1650-1750. Some suggest that after Bacon's Rebellion had demonstrated the dangers of this "class" cleavage among whites, the elite increasingly used negro slaves rather than indentured servants as labour; see Michael Guasco, "From Servitude to Slavery," in Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts, eds., The Atlantic World, 1450-2000 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 2008), p. 90.

By 1675, then, the border farmers' sense of their "independence," as well as of their rights as "Britons" and as "the commons," now combined with a number of other factors -- their dislike of the colony's Tidewater planter elite and governor; their anger over higher taxes that coincided with a drop in tobacco prices; their frustration over natural disasters that destroyed two spring crops, and an epidemic that killed some 50,000 head of cattle in a single year; the accessibility of weapons; and a growth in tensions and mutual hatreds between settlers and natives along the colony's interior borders -- to form the conditions necessary for a perfect storm. As the aging Governor Berkeley later ruefully observed: "How miserable that man is that Governes a People with six parts of seaven at least are Poore Endebted Discontented and Armed."<sup>119</sup> The state of affairs was such that a single spark might well ignite either a civil conflict within Virginia, or a border war with the Susquehannocks, or both simultaneously.<sup>120</sup>

This spark was struck in that July, in Northern Neck, the most recently settled section of the Tidewater, from a commercial disagreement between the Doeg neighbours of the Susquehannock, and the wealthy Virginia planter Thomas Mathew. Having seized some the latter's hogs in lieu of a claimed debt, several Doegs were killed during a

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<sup>119</sup>

Quoted in Wilcomb E. Washburn, The Governor and the Rebel: A History of Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1957), p. vi..

<sup>120</sup>

On this background see I.K. Steele, Warpaths, pp. 51-53; P. Wallenstein, Cradle of America, pp. 28-33; A. Taylor, American Colonies, pp. 40-48; D. Horowitz, The First Frontier, pp. 101-103; F. Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire, pp. 127-130; and more generally, the situation to the immediate south is the subject of V.W. Crane, The Southern Frontier, 1670-1732, pp. 3-21.

successful English pursuit to recover the animals, and then one of Mathew's herdsman in retaliation. When thirty militiamen crossed the Potomac into Maryland to attack a Doeg village in reprisal, they also struck a nearby camp of Maryland's Susquehannock allies and killed fourteen. Although Maryland launched formal protests, these were soon drowned out by anger over Indian retaliatory raids on the borders of both colonies. This, in turn, brought a joint expedition of some 750 Virginia-Maryland militiamen on the Susquehannocks' cannon-armed Piscataway Fort. Although outnumbered, the latter mounted a hot resistance that discouraged a direct assault and the militia, in hopes of starving out their enemies, subjected the fort to a siege that culminated in the unprovoked murder of five Susquehannock negotiators. Thereafter the defenders launched a series of night sorties and killed or wounded fifty militiamen. After seven weeks, the fort's garrison finally escaped by night and took to the forest, killing another ten militiamen in the process.<sup>121</sup>

If the militia ended its expedition by destroying the deserted fort, declaring victory and returning home, the siege's real result was the disintegration of Susquehannock buffer along the northern border. Worse still, a terrible retribution came in late January

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F. Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire, pp. 145-146; D. Horowitz, The First Frontier, pp. 104-107; E. Hinderaker and P.C. Mancall, At the Edge of Empire, p. 49; D.K. Richter, Facing East from Indian Country, pp. 106-107; and Wilcomb E. Washburn, The Governor and the Rebel: A History of Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina; 1957), pp. 20-22. In discussing these events, some have stressed the significance of the use of cannon-armed, European style fortifications by the Susquehannocks, and cited this as evidence that Amerindians had learned European military techniques; J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, pp. 81-83, and I.K. Steele, Warpaths, pp. 52-53, and the map on p. 54.



1676 when “the solitude of Virginia’s western wilderness was shattered by a human firestorm.” that “ranged all night through the plantations of Sittenburne Parish above the falls of the Rappahannock, igniting crops and buildings, and sweeping the settlers and families caught in its path to a fiery doom.” Thirty-six of all ages and both sexes died, the fortunate immediately and the unlucky only after being flayed alive and burned by their captors.<sup>122</sup> Finding themselves almost completely unopposed, the Amerindians’ raids continued through the next month and by March the number of dead colonists had risen to some three hundred.<sup>123</sup> “In these frightful times,” one Virginian recalled in 1705,

the most exposed small families withdrew into our houses of better numbers, which we fortified with palisades and redoubts. Neighbors in bodies joined their labors from each plantation to others alternately, taking their arms into the fields and setting sentinels. No man stirred out-of-doors unarmed. Indians were (ever and anon) espied, three, four, five, or six in a party lurking throughout the whole land, yet (what was remarkable) I rarely heard of any houses burned, though abundance was forsaken, nor ever of any corn or tobacco cut up, or other injury done, besides murders, except the killing of a very few cattle and swine.

Yet this writer admits that the situation seemingly differed in the backcountry, at the “heads of the rivers,” from which “frequent complaints of bloodshed” reached Governor Berkeley. In particular, he adds that the inhabitants at the heads the the James and York, “having now most people destroyed by the Indians flight thither from Potomac,” were especially impatient “at the many slaughters of their neighbors,” as well as with the governor’s frequent “promises of assistance,” and therefore “rose for their own

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<sup>122</sup>

D. Horowitz, The First Frontier, p. 107.

<sup>123</sup>

I.K. Steele, Warpaths, p. 55; W.E. Washburn, The Governor and the Rebel, pp. 24-25..

defense.”<sup>124</sup>

With the death toll mounting and reports of King Philip's War spurring rumours of a still more fearsome and widespread native uprising to come, even louder howls of rage and demands for protection echoed along the Tidewater's upland borders. The problem was just how to ensure this protection. From the point of view of the backwoods settlers, who had clustered together for self-defense, all natives were now, more than ever, suspect and probably guilty. So without asking questions, they struck back at any and all aboriginal groups within their reach and the fact that some fled to find safety elsewhere merely confirmed their guilt in the eyes of the colonists. Although initially adopting an equally aggressive posture, Governor Berkeley had not authorized the campaign against the Susuehannock and fearing matters were now getting out of hand, he condemned the militia campaigns against the Piscataway Fort and other targets. Countermanding his earlier orders for offensive actions, he instead disbanded the militia army raised for that purpose, ordered the settlers to draw together so as to provide their own protection, and prohibited local militias from making further unauthorized attacks on the Amerindians. But in March 1676 he also convinced the assembly to undertake the construction, or in some cases reconstruction, of nine defensive border forts along the Fall Line. Despite this, by now the threatened and outraged upcountry colonists were convinced that the governor was all too lenient with regard to their enemies, and suspected his policies

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“T.M.,” “The Beginning, Progress, and Conclusion of Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia, In the Years 1675 and 1676,” as printed in M.J. Adler, ed., The Annals of America, I, pp. 255-256.

merely sought to enrich himself and the elite by protecting their monopoly of the the Indian trade. Furthermore, again as in Massachusetts, the colonists had very little faith in the efficacy of Berkeley's a system of passive defence, which they saw as unnecessarily expensive and entailing an additional hike in the already high taxes. They argued as well that by placing the new forts on the lands of the large proprietors, and through the awarding of contracts for provisioning their garrisons to members of that same elite, even the actual forts really benefitted the colony's rulers while simultaneously hindering "the People's" own efforts to root out their "savage" enemies.<sup>125</sup>

In April this swelling wave of border anger found a leader in Nathaniel Bacon, a young Council member and prosperous planter whom Berkeley had already castigated for falsely accusing one group of Amerindians of stealing corn. Despite this, Bacon had expected to receive a commission from the governor and on this basis offered himself as commander of the border volunteers. Although this was refused, he and his men crossed into the Piedmont, failed to find any Susquehannoks, but then arranged for a party of friendly natives to destroy one enemy band, only to murder his new allies and steal their booty. When Berkeley denounced him in mid-May, Bacon marched on Jamestown, challenged the governor directly and was soon leading a full-scale insurrection. Bacon himself summed up the basic plank of the "Indian" policy of himself and his border

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<sup>125</sup>

Ibid.; F. Merk, History of the Westward Movement, p. 31; I.K. Steele, Warpaths, p. 55; E. Hinderacker and P.C. Mancall, At the Edge of Empire, pp. 49-51; W.E. Washburn, The Governor and the Rebel, pp. 24-25; and A. Taylor, American Colonies, pp. 148-149..

followers as being the destruction”all Indians in general for ... they are all Enemies.”<sup>126</sup> Consequently, it is no surprise that the laws adopted in May by the assembly, acting at his direction, stipulated that all Amerindians deserting their existing towns, or harboring hostiles, were now themselves enemies; that the lands they deserted were to be sold to help pay for the a general war against them; and that those captured were to be enslaved and sold.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, even friendly natives were now permitted to hunt with bows and arrows alone while to prevent them obtaining firearms (and to destroy the existing profitable monopoly), the Indian trade was banned completely. This achieved, Bacon received his desired commission and departed upcountry to wage a general, genocidal “Indian war.”<sup>128</sup> After Bacon and his men had departed to hunt and kill Indians, both within and without the colony’s boundaries, Governor Berkeley annulled the rebels’ program , declared Bacon a rebel and thereafter, the resulting political-social internal struggle overshadowed the so-called “Susquehannock War.” Since the details of what is known as “Bacon’s Rebellion” are well chronicled elsewhere, they need not be repeated

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<sup>126</sup>

Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 149. The full text of Bacon’s manifesto is available in S. Castillo and I. Schweitzer, eds., The Literatures of Colonial America, pp. 226-228.

<sup>127</sup>

The issue of Amerindian slavery in Virginia is dealt with briefly in Alan Galloway, The Indian Slave Trade: The Rise of the English Empire in the American South, 1670-1717 (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 2002), espially pp. 302-308.

<sup>128</sup>

H.C. Rountree, Pocahontas’s People, pp. 97-98. It is interesting that one of the causes for the resentment of Bacon and other rebel leaders had been their failure to be included within the Indian trade monopoly; A. Taylor, American Colonies, p. 149.

here.<sup>129</sup> For our purposes it is still worth glancing at his movement's "Declaration of the People" of July 30. Among the crimes listed that necessitated the "calling downe our Forces from the defence of the Frontiers, and most weake Exposed Places, for the prevention of civill Mischief," are listed the complete refusal of Berkeley and his associates to improve the colony "either by Fortifications, Townes or Trade;" as well as the charge that they had "protected favoured and Imboldened the Indians against his Majesties most Loyall subjects...."<sup>130</sup> Apart from serving as evidence that by this time the Fall Line border was recognized as a defensive "frontier" clearly separating the settled Tidewater colony from the Piedmont wilderness beyond, this document also makes clear that the rebels regarded Berkeley's frontier defence program, the forts included, as too little, too late. Furthermore, this in itself is illustrative of the growing gap in attitudes between the backwoodsmen and the inhabitants of the earlier settled areas, a gap which would widen progressively thereafter.

Turner, perhaps intuitively, recognized this fact and for him Berkeley's program marks the beginning of "of strenuous efforts ... to protect the frontier line which ran along the falls of the river[s]," and so of the Old West in that region. He then goes on to explain that "Virginia having earliest advanced thus far into interior, found it necessary

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129

The classic full-scale account remains W.E. Washburn's The Governor and the Rebel. Useful discussions of the various social issues and interpretations are Carole Shammas, "English-born and Creole-Elites in Turn-of-the Century Virginia," in T.W. Tate and D.L. Ammerman, The Cheasepeake in the Seventeenth Century, pp. 274-296, and D.B. Rutman and A.H. Rutmam, A Place in Time, pp. 79-93.

130

"The Declaration of the People" in S. Castillo and I. Schweitzer, eds., The Literatures of Colonial America, pp. 228-229.

in the closing years of the seventeenth century to draw a military frontier along that line.” In his somewhat confused account, Turner ignores the earlier Fall Line forts. Instead, he argues that the first such defensive line appeared only as early as 1675 as the result of a statute “providing that paid troops of five hundred men should be drawn from the midland and most secure parts of the country and placed on the ‘heads of the rivers’ and other places fronting upon the Indians.” He apparently either confuses and conflates Berkeley’s first (and disbanded) militia force with the troops raised to garrison the forts approved in March 1676, several of which installations he describes as being located either at the falls of the rivers or just above Tidewater,

one on the lower Potomac in Stafford County; one near the falls on the Rappahannock; one on the Mattaponi; one at the Pamunky; one at the falls of the James (near the site of Richmond); one near the falls of the Appomattox, and others on the Blackwater, the Nansemond, and the Accomac peninsula, all in the eastern part of Virginia.<sup>131</sup>

Having made these brief comments on the governor’s policies for creating a “military frontier,” based on a chain of forts, to defend his colony’s inland border, Turner hurries on to discuss its supposedly rapid transformation into a proper “settlement frontier.”

It is interesting, however, that in his search for the latter, this pioneer of American “frontier theory” completely ignores both Virginia’s earlier use of “frontier” fortifications as discussed above, and the other aspects of Berkeley’s program. With regard to this second issue, we must remember that both Berkeley’s frontier policies and political difficulties would frequently reoccur under his successors. As already noted,

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<sup>131</sup>

F.J. Turner, “The Old West,” p. 84. As indicated below, it would appear that Turner either confuses the two separate mobilisations, or that his date of 1675 should read 1676.

they also had to undertake the delicate balancing of settler safety with the preservation of alliances with the cross-border Amerindians. Some later historians have echoed Bacon's rebels and charged that Berkeley's policies of 1675-1675 were motivated by his own self-interest. Alan Taylor, for example, maintains that he "firmly opposed the genocidal proposal, for he and his friends cherished the profitable deerskin trade with the more peaceable Algonquian Indians," and that the governor well "understood that a controlled, gradual frontier expansion better served the interests of the wealthiest planters" by slowing the dispersal of their tenants and labourers to the new lands to the west.<sup>132</sup> These factors may well have been among Berkeley's considerations, but others existed as well. Thus his disbanding of the forces raised for an offensive against the Susquehannok, orders to the settlers for self-defense, and insistence that all future militia raids be first cleared by him as the colony's commander-in-chief, came after the Susquehannocks had made a peace offer. Regretting that the Virginians had turned on them, they announced that having killed ten whites for each of the five murdered chiefs, they were ready either to resume peaceful relations, or die fighting. In addition, in light of the military problems involved in striking at their dispersed bands in the heavy woods beyond the Fall Line, his own evident fear that the full-scale violence of King Philip's War might engulf Virginia, and his hopes of restoring Amerindian buffers along its borders, Berkeley in all probability did indeed hope to de-escalate the conflict for reasons other than personal

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A. Taylor, American Colonies, pp. 148-149.

gain.<sup>133</sup>

These considerations also should be born in mind when considering the program the governor had approved by the House of Burgesses (or Assembly) in March 1676. Apart from seeking to prevent the further spread of illegal firearms to Amerindians by momentarily suspending trade, he sought to strengthen his control over militia operations on the borders, and also designated various tributary tribes as subject to recruitment for service with the militia as scouts and allies in the colony's defence.<sup>134</sup> These probably were also to help in patrolling the gaps with newly raised mounted rangers, units that some regard as putting Virginia at the forefront of colonial military practice.<sup>135</sup> Turner rightly surmised that the chain of nine forts, to be garrisoned by the five hundred raised in the interior of the colony, was the centerpiece of Berkeley's program. And before dismissing this as a "conservative" measure of "passive" defense, we must remember that not only had such forts proved their effectiveness thirty years earlier, and that by 1675 the settlers outnumbered the local aboriginal population by

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<sup>133</sup>

W.E. Washburn, The Governor and the Rebel, pp. 24-25; I.K. Steele, Warpaths, p. 55; D. Horowitz, The First Frontier, pp. 107-108.

<sup>134</sup>

The Council's attempts to recruit Amerindians, and their reactions, is discussed in H.C. Rountree, Pocahontas's People, pp. 98-99.

<sup>135</sup>

This point is made by Virginia DeJohn Anderson, "Animals in the Wilderness: The Development of Livestock Husbandry in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake," The William and Mary Quarterly, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 59 (2002), p. 385. On the recruitment of Indians to patrol between forts, also see J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, p.84. As he points out, there was no doubt that whatever steps the authorities implemented, some enemy bands could still "slip through the gaps" if so they wished.



thirteen to one. As a result, it made military sense to establish centres in which the locals could gather for protection, and bases from which select ranger and militia detachments could challenge the hostile bands and launch strikes against them whenever possible. As I.K Steele points out, from Berkeley's point of view the forts also allowed the administration "to monitor unruly frontiersmen, and protect tribes attempting to live in peace with the colonists." It is thus hardly surprising that in the conditions of 1675-1676, the forts' construction only increased the settlers' resentments so that, as Steele also observes, this system of basing a military frontier on a string of forts then proved "unworkable" due to the high state of anger then reigning along the projected military frontier, and the chaos that accompanied Bacon's insurrection.<sup>136</sup>

The real recurring and long-term problems of this system of frontier forts, however, were different, and systematic. In the first place, given the absence of a standing force and regular troops, they usually had to be garrisoned by the colonial militia. This was "a source of weakness," points out one scholar, "because historically militiamen did not adjust well to garrison duty."<sup>137</sup> Apart from their obviously unreliability and numerous other flaws, poor training, bad discipline and frequent acts of insubordination included, it was both directly and indirectly very costly to keep units raised for permanent guard

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<sup>136</sup>

I.K. Steele, Warpaths, p. 55; D. Horowitz, The First Frontier, pp. 107-109; W.E. Wilcomb, The Governor and the Rebels, pp. 24-26, and his "Bacon's Rebellion," in Howard R. Lamar, ed., The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West (New York: Harper and Row; 1977), p. 66-67; E. Hinderaker and P.C. Mancall, At the Edge of Empire, p. 41; and J. Grenier, The First Way of War, p. 35.

<sup>137</sup>

J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, p. 84.

duties.<sup>138</sup> Then secondly, the hot and humid climatic conditions meant that these wooden structures demanded continuous maintenance. This in part explains why they initially were sited on the lands of those proprietors deemed capable of this task, and also why when a statute for preserving the forts was passed in 1679, it was accompanied by another act awarding what Turner calls “quasi manorial grants” to Major Lawrence Smith and Captain William Smith “to seate certain lands at the head (falls) of Rappahannock James River’ respectively.” Although this scheme was disallowed by London, such proprietors “continued to undertake colonial defense.”<sup>139</sup> Thus Fort Henry at the falls of Appomattox, which perhaps was the most important, was commanded and maintained for thirty years by the noted trader and explorer Captain Abraham Woods. Similarly, after 1679 Colonel William Byrd who commanded Fort Byrd at the falls of the James, Robert Beverley who holding the post on the Rappahannock, and similar

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A brief review of the colonial militia and its capabilities is provided in United States Headquarters of the Army, American Military History, 1607-1958, pp. 18-20, and the classic study for Virginia is William L. Shea, The Virginia Militia in the Seventeenth Century. In terms of regular “redcoats,” at the opening of the rebellion Berkeley had on hand only a handful remaining from the “Independent Company” provided by the Duke of York, later James II, to defend his county in the Old Dominion, as well as New York and Albany. Responding to the crisis of 1676, London mobilized and dispatched to Berkeley’s aid 1130 officers and men. These arrived in early 1677, but were greeted with scant enthusiasm, and departed in May leaving behind a garrison of only 100, and a mere handful who had accepted an official offer to become settlers; Reginald Hargreaves, The Bloodybacks: The British Serviceman in North America, 1655-1783 (London: Rupert Hart-Davis; 1968), pp. 32-38.

139

J.F. Turner, “The Old West,” pp. 84-85. Later (p. 87) he observes that Byrd conducted himself as a “Baron of the Border,” and elsewhere (p. 70) refers to fortified border settlements as “substantially garrisons, or ‘mark colonies.’” These comments demonstrate that despite his efforts to depict the American experience as utterly unique, he was nonetheless aware of parallels with the earlier frontiers in Europe.

commanders on the York and Potomac, are credited with maintaining a “row of forts serving the fur and peltry trade with the Indians,” but which also continued to form a frontier along the Fall Line that served as the springboard into the interior for explorers, traders and, in time, pioneer settlers,<sup>140</sup> but which simultaneously effectively otherwise “divided the two races,” one from the other.<sup>141</sup>

Despite such successes, this system of maintaining the colonial military frontier proved unreliable. This is illustrated by the deliberate levelling of Fort Mattapony in 1677, along with the collapse of others thanks to natural decay.<sup>142</sup> Meanwhile, after 1691 the Assembly also took steps to strictly define the boundaries between colonists and natives, and in that year passed a statute aimed at placing the system of mounted rangers on a firm basis. This assigned a detachment of eleven troopers and two Indian scouts, under the command of a lieutenant, to the falls or “heads” of each major river, an measure that was renewed almost annually for the rest of the century and only discontinued in 1722.<sup>143</sup> Fortunately for the colonists, however, the crisis of 1675-1676 had been an unmitigated disaster for the region’s native inhabitants: the Susquehannocks

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<sup>140</sup>

F. Merk, History of the Westward Movement, pp. 48-49.

<sup>141</sup>

J. Leditch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, p. 83. Although reservations for the tributary tribes were restored within the Tidewater by treaty in 1677 and 1680, these Amerindians were restricted to the area of a three-mile radius of their own towns; D.K. Richter, Facing East from Indian Country, p. 108. The negotiation of these treaties is discussed in some detail in H.C. Rountree, Pocahontas’s People, pp. 99-103.

<sup>142</sup>

J.F. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, p. 44.

<sup>143</sup>

F.J. Turner, “The Great West,” p. 85.

ended by being broken and fleeing in scattered bands that eventually were forcibly integrated into their former Iroquois enemies; Virginia's Occaneechee allies on the border had been slaughtered by Bacon after defeating a Susquehannock band for him; and the Pamunkey and other remnants of the once proud Powhatan were so decimated and subdued that by the 1690s, when borderers began to worry about a threat from the Seneca, they were useless as buffers. Fortunately for the Old Dominion, by that time Governor Edmund Andros of New York was successfully forming the Iroquois-English alliance, famous as the Covenant Chain, that protected Virginia from attack. So if colonist-native tensions persisted, and occasional incidents of border violence still occurred, the province faced no major cross-border threat such as those posed to New England and New York by much more powerful Amerindian adversaries and their French backers. As for the remnants of the Piedmont's indigenous inhabitants, they were easily subdued and in 1712 one of Berkeley's successors, Governor Spotswood, reported that they were "living quietly on our frontiers, trafficking with the Inhabitants."<sup>144</sup>

This comment also demonstrates the extent to which the traditional European concept of "frontier" had been transplanted into the Old Dominion. Although the Piedmont was slowly being penetrated by stockmen in search of the herds of wild horses

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Quoted in F.J. Turner, "The Old West," p. 88. For conditions along the Virginian frontier after 1676 see J. Leitch Wright, Jr., The Only Land They Knew, pp. 89-93, and E. Hinderaker and Peter C. Mancall, At the Edge of Empire, pp. 51-52. A detailed account of the position of Virginia's "tributary" Indians is provided in H.C. Rountree, Pacaontas's People, chapters 6-7.

and cattle that had found refuge there from Tidewater farmers, it was still unsettled and for Spotswood, the region clearly formed a defensive border or frontier zone that helped insulate his colony from possible external threats. In these relatively pacific times the ranger units proved sufficient to provide security along the Fall Line. Yet the continuous maintenance of their supporting forts remained a burden on the colony's resources and as just mentioned, attempts to pass the costs on to select landed proprietors achieved only a mixed success. Consequently, Virginia's rulers not unnaturally sought an alternative method and in 1701 had recourse to the age-old practice of "military settlers." The assembly then resolved that the best way of ensuring their borders was the "settlement in co-habitations upon the said land frontiers within this government ... by encouragements to induce societies of men to undertake the same," and passed the appropriate statute. This envisaged the formation of settlement "societies" with a minimum of twenty men apiece, and the granting to each such "society" of between 10,000 to 30,000 acres [4050-12,150ha] of borderland. Holding these lands in common, each such entity was to order and manage, settle and plant its holdings. The government meanwhile was to pay for surveying a 200-acre tract intended as the site of the actual "co-habitation" or frontier town, as well as all quit-rents for twenty years on the half-acre [.203ha] house lots within. Each society member was to receive one such lot for his home, as well as the right to an adjacent 200-acres [81ha], until the grant was completely occupied.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>145</sup>

The details of and quotations from the statute of 1701 are taken from F.J. Turner, "The Old West," 85-86.

Apart from a twenty-year tax exemption, these settlers were freed from all usual military service except for that they imposed upon themselves as border troops. The assembly, however, made this role clear by legislating that “society” members enjoyed these privileges:

Provided alwayes, and it is the true intent and meaning of this act that for every five hundred acres [202.5ha] of land to be granted in pursuance of this act there shall be and shall be continually kept upon the said land one christian man between sixteen and sixty years of age, perfect of limb, able and fit for service who shall also be continually be provided with a well fixed musquett or fuzee, a good pistoll, sharp simeter, tomahawk and five pounds of good clean pistoll powder and twenty pounds of sizeable leaden bulletts or swan or goose shott to be kept within the fort directed by this act besides the powder and shott for his necessary or useful shooting at game. Provided also that the said warlike christian man shall have his dwelling and continual abode within the space of two hundred acres [81ha] of land to be laid out in a geometricall square or as near that figure as conveniency will admit....

Finally, within two years of taking up its grant, each society was obligated to create in the centre of its “co-habitation” a fifty-acre [20.5ha] area surrounded “with good sound pallisadoes at least thirteen feet long [3.9m] and six inches [.15m] in diameter in the middle of the length thereof, and set double and at least three feet [.92m] within the ground.”<sup>146</sup>

For Turner, here was the Virginia assembly’s concept “of a frontiersman, and of the frontier towns by which the Old Dominion should spread her population into the upland South.” True, he admits, that in the event, it was largely Irish-Scot and German pioneers who eventually flooded and settled the backcountry of the Piedmont and Appalachia. Even so, he strongly suggests that like the fort, the “fortified town”

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<sup>146</sup>Quotations from *Ibid.*, p. 86.

remained an essential institution of what he sees as an advancing “settlement frontier,” and points to Kentucky’s later “stations” -- such as the legendary Boonesborough -- as evidence.<sup>147</sup> Perhaps so, but in his hurry to convert the admitted “military” into a “settlement frontier,” he ignores the development of Virginia’s frontier before 1675-1676, and only skips briefly through developments through the 1680s-1690s until the law of 1701. By so doing, he avoids the complicated interconnections between settlements and military necessity. Yet as even Turner himself admits, Virginia’s Fall Line border was initially “a military frontier,” modeled on European concepts. But rather than “wedges” thrust into Indian country to facilitate its opening,<sup>148</sup> he forgets that it was intended by the colony’s government to form as a firm boundary between their territory and the Indian lands in the Piedmont beyond and, as illustrated in the quotations above, it was in this traditional sense that the term was used. In addition, until the 1720s it was military needs that promoted frontier settlement (as in 1701), and not border settlers who forced military-political expansion. Indeed, even in 1676 the creation of a military frontier was promoted by a political leadership eager to control the settlers, not to encourage their penetration of the Piedmont, and both the Fall Line border and

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<sup>147</sup>

Ibid., pp. 86-87. A useful review of the later frontier “stations in general, and Boonesborough in particular, are available in F. Merk, History of the Western Movement, pp. 87-88, and more recently, Malcolm J. Rohrbough, Trans-Appalachian Frontier: People, Societies, and Institutions, 1775-1850, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 2007), pp. 24-37.

<sup>148</sup>

This is Turner’s description of the frontier “military post,” although he admits it also served to protect the settlers; see his “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” pp. 17-18.

frontier in fact remained nearly stationary for over three decades. It was only in 1710 that Governor Spotswood suggested pushing settlement further westwards, in 1714 that he sponsored a settlement of German immigrants on the Rapidan River within the Piedmont, in 1716 that he made his own exploratory venture into the region, and during 1720-1723 that he organized the border or frontier counties of Spotsylvania and Berwick, while offering enticements to the pioneers pushing up the Rappahannock to settle them.<sup>149</sup>

Finally, even if Turner is correct in arguing that by the 1690s-early 1700 fortified “frontier towns” were found along the borders and military frontiers of other English colonies in general, and those of New England in particular, this in itself means little. Given the vast distances involved and limited resources available, a “military settler” option like that chosen by Virginia in 1701 was merely a sensible solution to the problem of maintaining a defensive frontier. Their towns not only provided a buffer for the main area of colonial settlement while simultaneously serving as attractive targets for enemy attacks, but they also were suitable spring boards for explorers in peace and reprisal raids in war. Inevitably, these roles created friction between the exposed borderers and insulated citizens of the main colonies during the 1690s-early 1700s, but in the times of the latter had little choice but to support their frontier forts and settlements.<sup>150</sup> Those of Virginia served all these roles, but after 1676 that colony was

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<sup>149</sup>Turner describes Spotswood’s efforts in “The Old West,” pp. 90-92.

<sup>150</sup>

The best discussion of the role of frontier forts and fortified towns is probably G. Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, especially pp. 31-34, 71-73, 97-99.



fortunate in that it long faced no powerful cross-border foes in the form of Amerindian coalitions backed by a European rival of the British homeland.<sup>151</sup> Even without such backing, such coalitions could be dangerous, as was made evident by the Yamasee War in the Carolinas during 1715-1716.<sup>152</sup> To the north of Virginia the even more powerful Iroquois Confederacy might have presented an even more potent opponent had not its interests in opposing New France coincided with those of England. Thanks in large part thanks to the diplomacy of New York's Governor Edmund Andros, this potential threat was transformed by alliance into a useful buffer for the colonies along the mid-Atlantic.<sup>153</sup> Farther north still, however, Massachusetts and the other colonies making up New England were much less fortunate. True, their own immediate aboriginal enemies had been crushed in King Philip's War, but after 1676 the colonists there soon found themselves confronting not just new Amerindian enemies in the form of the Abenaki along what is known as the "Northeastern Frontier," enemies backed by England's great imperial rival -- the French in Acadia and Quebec -- whose competing claims

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<sup>151</sup>

Even so, Spotswood justified his exploratory expeditions and attempts at promoting settlement in 1710-1720 by a possible future French and Indian threat from the Mississippi Valley; F.J. Turner, "The Old West," pp. 88-91.

<sup>152</sup>

A, Taylor, Colonial America, pp. 233-236; V.W. Crane, The Southern Frontier, pp. 162-186.

<sup>153</sup>

On Andros and the Iroquois see D.K. Richter, Facing East from Indian Country, pp. 141-157; F. Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire, pp. 191-194; and Francis Jennings, ed., The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press; 1995), pp. 160-163.

transformed the region into a disputed borderland between the two empires. And in this case, both the European antagonists set out to create military frontiers, efforts which did much to both elevate the existing regional tensions and the savagery of the conflicts that ensued.

### **The Northeastern-Acadian Borderland**

New Englanders were fully aware that apart from the hostile natives in the northeast, some of their own, more immediate and earlier Amerindian “rebels” of the 1670s had had contacts with the French in Maine.<sup>154</sup> Consequently, it is hardly surprising that rather than recognizing their own failures, leading Puritans often sought to shift responsibility for King Philip’s revolt on to their Papist rivals.<sup>155</sup> Indeed, as early as 1620 and the founding of Plymouth., fear of a French (or Spanish) counterstroke had been one factor in the considerations of the Massachusetts planters.<sup>156</sup> Referring to King Philip’s War,

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<sup>154</sup>

For example, the account by Quintin Stockwell of Deerfield, as published by Increase Mather as one of his providential “Preservations,” tells how his Indian captors trekked north and met with Frenchmen, who treated him kindly and intervened on his behalf; A History of God’s Remarkable Providences, pp. 35-40.

<sup>155</sup>

G. Plank, “Culture of Conquest,” p. 32.

<sup>156</sup>

Thomas Dudley, for example, recorded in March 1631 that the newly arrived settlers had received “advertisements by some of the late arrived ships from London and Amsterdam of some French preparations against us;” see Thomas Dudley, “Hardships in Massachusetts Bay Colony,” in Mortimer J. Adler, et al., eds., The Annals of America, 18 vols. (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica; 1976), p. 120. Anglo-French conflicts and negotiations over their colonial spheres during 1613-1632 are discussed in Ken MacMillan, Sovereignty and Possession in the English New World: The Legal Foundations of Empire, 1576-1640 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 2006), pp. 194-201.

Cotton Mather insisted “that a French Coal hath kindled this unhappy fire” while Edward Randolph reported to the Lords of Trade in 1676 that the Massachusetts government “hath a perfect hatred for the French, because of their too near neighbourhood, and losse of their trade, and looke upon them with an evill eye, believing they have had a hand in the late warre with the Indians.”<sup>157</sup> During the conflict itself, at least some Puritans suspected the “Papist” French of providing arms to their immediate enemies. According to one observer of early 1676, all the Indians, the Mohegans and Mohawks excepted, had “in one way or other declared themselves enemies,” and been “animated ... to an unexpected boldness” by “the Monsieur that came down and returned last summer through the woods” with promises of “aid and ammunition over the lakes and by ships that lie on their coast this summer.”<sup>158</sup> Reporting to London in 1678, for example, agents of New England protested that Massachusetts had been drawn into the war by the actions of other colonies, but also insisted that the “Indians have been furnished with arms by the French and others” since “there was as little liberty, if not

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Quotes in G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 40. The second is from Edward Randolph's response “to several heads of inquiry concerning the present state of New England,” a version of which is published in the Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and the West Indies, 1675-1676, 1067, 12 October 1676, reads: “The Boston government imposes on the French and encourages an interloping trade, causing the inhabitants dread of a French invasion, and looks on the French with an evil eye, believing they had a hand in the Indian wars.”

158

“Letter of R. Wharton to John Winsley, 10 February 1676,” in Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and West Indies, 1675-1676, 816.

less, in Massachusetts than in other colonies to sell arms to the Indians.”<sup>159</sup> Or as Cotton Mather would bitterly observe two decades later, however troublesome were Maine’s Abenaki, these “Half Indianized French and Half Frenchified Indians” might be, they were armed by French traders and urged on to murder by Roman Catholic priests, so that it was in truth the French who were the “chief Source of New England’s Miseries.”<sup>160</sup>

Thanks to these concerns, New England’s relations with Acadia north of the Maine border zone naturally had worsened during Philip’s War. At that time the French officials had imposed a duty on exports of cod from Acadian waters, and also sought to ban trade New England’s trade with the Micmacs. In January 1677 the Massachusetts Council followed suit. Worried that firearms were reaching their own Native enemies from Acadia, its members also attempted to prohibit commerce with the region.. Worse still from the New Englanders’ point of view, in that year Nova Scotian Indians struck at the vital fishery by capturing several vessels off Cape Sable Islands, possibly in response to the seizure there of Micmacs by an “over-zealous” Indian fighter who had sold them as slaves to the Portuguese. This proved an isolated incident, however, and

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<sup>159</sup>

“Response of the Agents of New England, to Mr. Edmund Randolph’s Narrative of the State of New England, London, 28 June 1678,” in Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and the West Indies, 1677-1680, 740, 28 June 1678, pp. 201-202. They also express their satisfaction with the intercolonial boundaries (or “ancient bounds”) and agree to “the giving up of Nova Scotia to the French, though they would rather have has their fellow subjects [as] neighbours.”

<sup>160</sup>

Cotton Mather, “Decennium Lustruosum” (1699), as quoted in John Mack Faragher, A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland (New York: W.W. Norton; 2005), p. 85. These attitudes are also discussed in H.E. Selesky, “Colonial America,” pp. 66-70.

with the bans impossible of enforcement by either party, after 1678 Boston's economic stranglehold on Nova Scotia's Acadian settlements continued to tighten.<sup>161</sup>

In fact, the extent of French support for King Philip's forces was probably minimal and the Natives seemingly obtained as much or more powder and ball from Dutch and English traders in New York as they did from the French in Maine.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, while they eventually proved capable of defeating their immediate Indian "rebels," the New Englanders were much less successful with regard to Maine's Abenaki. Infuriated by the conduct of the expansionist English, and especially by the latter's habit of seizing and selling their fellows into slavery, these tribes had attacked and destroyed the settlements at Casco and Sagadahock in August 1676. Vicious fighting continued until Spring 1678. Then Massachusetts was obliged by the Treaty of Casco to abandon the outlying settlements, to recognize Abenaki rights to the territory east of the Kennebec, and to permit the Abenaki to collect rent from settlers farming in this border region.<sup>163</sup> But apart

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<sup>161</sup>

G. Plank, "Culture of Conquest," pp. 32-33; G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, pp. 42-43.

<sup>162</sup>

Edward Randolph's response "to several heads of inquiry concerning the present state of New England," the version of which published in the Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and the West Indies, 1675-1676, 1067, 12 October 1676, notes that "a great outcry was made against the Fort Albany for supplying the Indians during the war." The evidence in both these regards is analysed in detail in B.J. Given, A Most Pernicious Thing, pp. 81-92. It also appears that during 1658-1670, when the English held Port Royal in Nova Scotia, that the Abenaki of the northeast "had received merchandise and munitions from Boston in exchange for their furs;" G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, p. 167; also see the comments in G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 40.

<sup>163</sup>

G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, pp. 167-168.

from temporarily slowing New England's northeastern expansion, this short-lived peace also provided a haven for many of the embittered native refugees from the conquered core of Wachusett. While some of these latter resettled as hunters in the White and Green Mountains of New Hampshire and Vermont, others joined the Western Abenaki in moving north to settle around French Canadian missions such as Sillery and St. Francois, there to await their chance for revenge.<sup>164</sup>

Whatever their concerns about this future threat gathering just beyond the horizon, the leaders of the various English colonies remained surprisingly confident given that their military resources were at best inadequate, and that they continually worked at cross-purposes.. In mid-May 1680, for example, Governor Simon Bradstreet reported to London that he had “no standing forces, but in each of their 40 towns [there is] a foot company of listed soldiers, trained six times a year; in Boston there [are] eight, in Salem two companies, [and I] have also six or seven troops of horse.” Even so, he continued, the colony's coasts were free of privateers and pirates while the forces available to its neighbours were “not great; the greatest strength of the Indians since the war being the Maquees 200 miles to the west towards Canada.” It also had “little commerce with the French at Canada, who are reported to be 4,000 or 5,000 men,” while those “at Nova Scotia are few and weak....” If problems did exist, he added, then from his point of view these came from the unilateral actions of Edmund Andros, then Governor New York.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup>

J.D. Drake, King Philip's War, pp. 169-172; I.K. Steele, Warpaths, pp. 133-134..

<sup>165</sup>

Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers Colonial, 1677-1680, 1360. i., 18 May 1680; received 27 June 1680, pp. 528-529.

Apart from encouraging the Iroquois Confederacy in its hostility to the French in Quebec, Andros had recognized that the Abenaki's victories and withdrawal of Massachusetts settlers from Maine in 1676 offered him the opportunity to assert the claims and interests of his patron and superior, the Duke of York (later King James II), in accord with the patents issued by Charles II in 1664 and 1674. These had granted to the duke both New Netherland (renamed New York), along with "the territory between the St. Croix River and the Kennebec and extending back of the St. Lawrence."<sup>166</sup> Having dispatched a sloop to reconnoiter the region, Andros reported that "all said Eastern parts were wholly deserted by ye Indyans, and then neglected by Boston, who had usurped itt, but now lost itt." He therefore informed the remaining "Inhabitants 'twas the Dukes and nott their businesse, and dayly heareing of ye number of captives, sloop and vessells" taken by the supposedly absent Indians, "doing mischeife as farr as Piscattaway," he had resolved to act to restore order. For this purpose, "in June 1677 [he had] sent a force and strong fram'd Redoutt in four good sloops to take possession and settle in his Royll Highness right at Pemaquid, and defend or secure the ffishery giving notice thereof to the Massachusetts and our other neighbours."<sup>167</sup> By so doing, Andros had created borderland buffer between the New Englanders in the southwest and their fellow Acadian borderers to the northeast. In the process, however, he had destroyed the

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<sup>166</sup>

John Graham Reid, "Political Definitions: Creating Maine and Acadia," in E.W. Baker, et al., eds. American Beginnings, pp. 184-185.

<sup>167</sup>

Governor Andros to the Committee of Trade and Plantations, November 1677, in E.B. O'Callaghan ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 3 (1853), p. 256.

existing framework that governed the relations of Massachusetts with its Acadian neighbours and their Indian allies. In other words, as George Rawlyk observes, the New Yorkers' presence at Pemaquid meant that "Massachusetts was no longer the effective master of its own special relationship with Nova Scotia."<sup>168</sup>

Building a fort with a garrison of fifty regulars and seven guns at Pemaquid, Andros' representatives then assigned a four-gun sloop the task of controlling the fishery and coast, and they set out to regulate both the fishery and fur trade. They simultaneously raised past English claims to Acadia, rejected the provisions of the Breda Treaty of 1667,<sup>169</sup> insisted instead that since the true Anglo-French border lay along the St. Croix, and ordered all French subjects to evacuate the territory west of that river.<sup>170</sup> As just indicated, this behaviour alienated both New Englanders as well as the French since, as one English official admitted in 1680, "the limit to their claims is fixed by their convenience or interest, and they never fail to claim a right to any region which suits them."<sup>171</sup> Indeed, as early as October 1677, the Massachusetts General Court already had

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<sup>168</sup>G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 42.

<sup>169</sup>

Such claims in the Acadian region were defined in a report endorsed "Sept. 79. Mr. Henry Joselin of Eastern County. For His Excellence Sir E. Andros, Gov. Gen. of all his Royal Highness territories in America;" Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers Colonial, 1677-1680, 1134, September 1679, p. 423.

<sup>170</sup>

G. Lanctot, History of Canada, II, pp. 168-169. He remarks that the New Englanders "worked on the principle that their interests were never limited by the rights of others," but is clearly referring to Andros and his agents.

<sup>171</sup>

"Randolph's Report to the Council of Trade (1680)," in E.B. O'Callaghan ed., in Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 3 (1853), p. 941.



complained that Andros was attempting “to inhibit the people of this jurisdiction from their ancient privilege and liberty as Englishmen,”<sup>172</sup> while in June 1680 Governor Bradstreet included the New York governor’s interruption of fishing by boats from Massachusetts among his colony’s major problems.<sup>173</sup> The governor of New Plymouth agreed and, pleading poverty thanks in part to “the late war with our barbarous enemies,” in that same Autumn explained that Andros’ actions left petitioners from his colony “destitute of any convenient place within our precincts for trade or fishing, as other parts of the country are advantaged with, especially since Penobscot and other of those eastern parts fit for trade, granted to us in our patent, were by the French forcibly taken and detained from us, and (as we are informed) were since by your majesty granted to his Highness the Duke of York....”<sup>174</sup>

Equally worrying for the New Englanders, Andros’ intervention and his agents’ high-handed actions seemed likely to disrupt their profitable trading relations with the Acadians in Port Royal, to destroy Saint-Castin’s position at Pentagouet on the Penobscot, to wreck this latter’s business partnership with the influential Boston merchant John Nelson,<sup>175</sup> and so complicate relations with the Abenaki as well. Worse

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<sup>172</sup>

Quoted in G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, p. 41.

<sup>173</sup>

Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers: Colonial, 1677-1680, 1360. i., 18 May 1680; received 27 June 1680, p. 530.

<sup>174</sup>

“Petition of the Colony of New Plymouth to King Charles II,” Autumn 1680, in “The Hinckley Papers,” p. 52

<sup>175</sup>

In 1674 Nelson had inherited the claims to the Acadian region that his uncle Thomas

still, they threatened to provoke a renewed French interest in Acadia or Nova Scotia which, at this time, had reached such a low ebb that the French historian Pierre de Charlevoix, writing a few decades later, would mistakenly conclude that an expedition dispatched by the commander at Pemaquid had forcibly invaded the region so that “the English for the fifth time became masters of Acadia and of all that separates it from New England.”<sup>176</sup> Although this judgement overstates the activism of Andros’ agents, Charlevoix accurately gauged the essence of the French position. While Acadia could indeed offer France great benefits, the Quebec Intendant Jacques Duchesneau reported late in 1681 that in this colony “nothing is produced and although there are some five hundred French of both sexes and all ages, they subsist only thanks to the English and they satisfy their needs by means of some furs which they obtain by trading with the Sauvages.” In fact, he added, “poverty is not the only misfortune of these French; their internal divisions are even greater.” Moreover, he continued, they have “neither order nor justice,” largely because “those sent here to command them crush them, and meanwhile they are left in the same misery as before.”<sup>177</sup>

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Temple had acquired under the Lord Protector Cromwell in 1656; see G.A Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, pp. 26-36 and Donald F. Chard’s brief biography in George W. Brown, David M. Hayne, et al., eds., Dictionary of Canadian Biography: 2: 1701-1740 (Toronto: University of Toronto; 1969), pp. 493-494.

<sup>176</sup>P.F.X. de Charlevoix, History and General Description of New France, 2, p. 211.

<sup>177</sup>

Report of Intendant Jacques Duchesneau to the Minister of Marine Marquis de Seignelay on Acadia’s Advantages and Boston’s Domination, Quebec, 13 November, 1681, in Legislature de Quebec, Collection de Manuscripts contenant Lettres, Memoires, et Autres Documents Historiques relatifs à la Nouvelle-France recueillies aux archives de la province de Quebec, ou copies a l’étranger, 4 vols. (Quebec: Imprimerie A. Cote; 1883-1885), 1, pp. 286-287. The situation in Nova Scotia and Port Royal at this

As Charlevoix's comments suggest, the French usually did not distinguish between the New York and the Boston "English." Governor Count Frontenac of Quebec similarly conflated the two, although he had no difficulty in identifying the commander of Pemaquid as the English official who always claimed to extend his limits up to the River St Croix, and sends vessels "to fish and trade along the coasts appertaining to your Majesty."<sup>178</sup> When repeating this complaint to the minister, he immediately added that vessels

of Baston [Boston] have even been sent as far as Cape Breton, near to la Baleine [Whale Island], at the entrance to our Gulf, to seize and carry off the merchandise lost in the ship St Joseph, belonging, to the leasees (fermiers) of the [Acadia] company, which was wrecked in this vicinity towards the end of August last year. These goods they loaded on one 60-ton vessel, and two others arriving from the coast of the island of Newfoundland, and they also carried off some [goods] to Baston without even taking the trouble to find out whether they had been abandoned, or if the time limit for reclaiming them had elapsed, which was far from being the case.<sup>179</sup>

In light of this incident, and the terms of the patents given the Duke of York, both

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time is outlined in G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, pp. 42-43, and G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, p. 169.

<sup>178</sup>

Extract from a report to the King (File No. 424) of Count Frontenac, Quebec, on English Claims and Fishing on Coast of Maine to Ste. Croix River, 2 November, 1681," in in E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), p. 148. An extract is quoted in a report on the "English Invasions of French Possessions in America, 21 April, 1723," in Ibid., p. 917.

<sup>179</sup>

Extract from Letter of Count Frontenac (File No. 424) to the Minister Marquis de Seignelay, Quebec, 2 November 1681, Collection de Manuscrits, 1, p. 284; abstract in the report "English Invasions of French Possessions in America, 21 April, 1723," in O'Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), p. 917

Frontenac and Intendant Duchesneau seriously worried that the Massachusetts merchants might be attempting to extend their commercial activities to the south shore of the St.

Lawrence River. For this reason Frontenac added:

While waiting until you are pleased to send me instructions on how I should act in this matter [of the St. Joseph], I have thought it my duty as well to order the Sieur de la Valliere to send to demand from those in Baston the reasons for these sorts of enterprises and the justice which they intend, seeing that their limits are marked at the River St. George, but that by coming to Cape Breton, they went one-hundred and fifty leagues beyond these.<sup>180</sup>

The protests from Frontenac and his Acadian deputy found the Bostonians already fully absorbed by their quarrels with London and Andros, and in no mood to increase their problems by irritating the French as well. As a consequence, in early October 1682 the General Court resolved to assure the French governor that those guilty of activities “contrary to the treaty and ratification of the articles of peace concluded at Breda,” both in the past and future, would be held “liable to the poenaltjes and forfeitures provided against them by the lawes of those governments, where such offenses shall be committed.” As their decision makes clear, their aim was still “the preservation of a good correspondence betweene our neighbours of Canada and Accadie, ... and ourselves,” the relationship from which they had profited so greatly in the past.<sup>181</sup> Yet unfortunately this relationship, their accustomed commercial hegemony over Nova

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<sup>180</sup>

Ibid. Sieur de la Poipe in Placentia, Newfoundland, also warned Paris, in similar terms, of English encroachments on the French fisheries in Acadia as well as Newfoundland; Letter to Minister Colbert, (File No. 384, Canada), 30 August 1680, Ibid..

<sup>181</sup>

Quotes from G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, pp. 44-45

Scotia's Acadians, as well as their exploitation of that region's fishery, depended on maintaining a highly porous borderland rather than a demarcated and less permeable European-style frontier zone, and decisions on this issue were no longer their's to make alone.

One result of the unilateral actions of the agents of Andros and Colonel Thomas Dongan, his equally activist successor as governor of New York,<sup>182</sup> was indeed a revival of French interest and activity in Acadia. Within the region, the authority of Versailles rested lightly on the shoulders of the inhabitants and in the eyes of official Boston, their most prominent and stable French representative was Saint-Castin, John Nelson's trading partner.<sup>183</sup> As the virtual lord of the Penobscot, where he established his trading factory some five miles from the site of Pentagouet, Saint-Castin at times did serve briefly as a formal representative of Quebec and Paris. Despite this, his real attachment to the French Crown usually remained tenuous at best, and the real basis of his position was his influence among the Abenaki. Initially based on his life-style, friendships and trading contacts, after 1688 this would increase dramatically thanks to his marriage to Matilda, daughter of the important Penobscot chief Madokawando. Yet as a former professional soldier, Saint-Castin undoubtedly had provided Maine's natives with

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New York's expansionist policies in general are outlined briefly in Gilles Harvard, The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701: French-Native Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century, trans. Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott (Montreal, PQ, and Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press; 2001), pp. 38, 43-44, while their influence on the northeast region is discussed in J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, pp. 174-180.

<sup>183</sup>

Nelson's relationship with Saint-Castin is discussed in G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, pp. 35-36.

military advice earlier, perhaps as early as their successful war with the New Englanders of 1676-1678.<sup>184</sup> It therefore was natural that those New Englanders harbouring suspicions of French intentions saw him as an imminent threat. "Having seen a letter," Governor Edward Cranfield of New Hampshire wrote to Thomas Hinckley, his opposite in New Plymouth, in mid-February 1683,

written by Captain Hook to Captain Barefoot, intimating that he had received advice from the captain of the Fort at Casco that there is a strong suspicion of a sudden rising of the Indians to attack the English at the eastward, being thereto instigated by one Castine, a Frenchman; and this being a matter of weight and importance, -- I have thought it necessary to communicate it to your honor, that we may consult therein for the common safety of his majesty's Colonies... [through] the mutual assistance of the neighboring Colonies in case of any attempt made by the Indians or others....

To this end, he suggests a meeting of colonial representatives in Boston to discuss practical plans for mutual support in accord with the "commands in and by his majesty's royal letters in the year 1682."<sup>185</sup>

This last comment points to another consequence of King Philip's War. That conflict had pointed up the deficiencies of New England's military system, and a worsening international system, as well as the possibility of future Indian wars, made this a matter of primary concern. In the interim, however, the General Court in Boston

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<sup>184</sup>

Ibid.. For a brief biography see John Clarence Webster, ed., Acadia at the End of the Seventeenth Century: Letters, Journals and Memoirs (Saint John, NB: New Brunswick Museum; 1934), pp. 192-194, and (with bibliography), see George Cerbelaud Salagnac's entry in G.W. Brown, et al., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2, pp. 4-7, who describes him (p. 6) as being more Abenaki than French.

<sup>185</sup>

"The Hinckley Papers," iv, 5, p. 121;

also had had to cope with enemies both at home and in London, quite apart from its New Yorker rivals at Pemaquid. Led in part by Edward Randolph, who became the Bay Colony's "collector and surveyor of customs" in 1678, this opposition repeatedly assured the imperial authorities in London that many New Englanders longed for more centralized control from the centre to ensure greater inter-colonial cooperation against the Amerindians and their French allies,<sup>186</sup> a position also urged by expansionist New Yorkers. These efforts finally bore fruit in June 1684. Then the Court of Chancery in London annulled the Massachusetts Charter, a decision confirmed by a royal decree of that October.<sup>187</sup> This meant that at the very moment that New Englanders faced a reinvigorated French effort to assert control in Acadia and Nova Scotia, Massachusetts was left in a state of administrative chaos that lasted until James II established the royal government early in 1686. With the colony thus deprived of effective leadership, its mariner-adventurers had a free hand to trade and fish in Acadian waters as they saw fit, and the New Yorkers, now under Colonel Dongan, were left as England's

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<sup>186</sup>

Typical in this regard are the "Letter of R. Wharton to John Winsley, 10 February 1676," in Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and West Indies, 1675-1676, 816, and Edward Randolph's response "to several heads of inquiry concerning the present state of New England," in Ibid., 1067, 12 October 1676, which insists that the "inhabitants are genuinely desirous of submitting to a general government to be established by the King." Randolph's role in these events is discussed in L.B. Wright, The Atlantic Frontier, p. 143.

<sup>187</sup>

Ibid., pp. 142-144; Richard B. Morris with Henry Steele Commager, Encyclopedia of American History (New York: Harper; 1953), p. 53; A. Taylor, American Colonies, p. 276.

representatives to deal with the French authorities in Port Royal and Quebec.<sup>188</sup>

As for Saint-Castin and the Abenaki, by the late 1670s their immediate concerns no longer focused simply on the aggression of New Englanders, but included the equally forward policies of the New Yorkers as well. Not only did these last act on the principle of “no man to trust any Indiyans,”<sup>189</sup> but when necessary they even threatened the Maine natives with assaults from New York’s own Iroquois Mohawk allies.<sup>190</sup> This threat undoubtedly was one factor in the calculations of Saint-Castin and his native friends, but another was the French trader, like the Bostonians, was loathe to abandon his profitable commercial ties as long as he himself could continue to live independently, “being out of the limits of any established government.”<sup>191</sup>

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188

G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, p. 47.

189

Quoted from a New York Council session of 11 September 1677 in J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 194.

190

Faced with the fact that the hostile Abenaki made “disagreeable neighbors,” the French historian Charlevoix wrote several decades later, the New Yorkers “deemed it necessary to involve them with the Iroquois [that is, the Mohawks], who did not require much urging to open a war with the Abenakis. The latter, too weak to resist the English and Iroquois at once, had been forced to make terms with the former;” P.F.X. de Chalevoix, History and General Description of New France, 3, pp. 210-211. Also see Governor Count Frontenac’s Report to the King (File No. 424) of Count Frontenac, Quebec, on English Claims and Fishing on Coast of Maine to Ste. Croix River, 2 November, 1681,” in E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), p. 148. More generally, see the comments of E.A. Churchill, “Mid Seventeenth-Century Maine,” p. 245.

191

Jeremy Belknap, The History of New Hampshire, 3 vols. (Boston, 1813), 1, pp. 130-131, as quoted in G.C. Salagnac’s biography of Saint-Castine, in C.W. Brown, et al., eds., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2, p. 6.



### **International Rivalries and Colonial Skirmishes**

Reviewing the state of Canada in September 1671, Intendant of New France Jean Talon had reported he was “assured that the English will urge the settlement of the Boundaries between Pentagouet and Boston,” and requested instructions for any negotiations that the king might wish him to conduct.<sup>192</sup> But when the recently reoccupied French posts at Pentagouet, Port Royal and Jemseg on New Brunswick’s St. John River were seized and plundered by Dutch “filibusters” in 1674, Count Frontenac declared himself “persuaded those of Boston have employed these people to perpetuate this outrage on us, ... bearing with impatience our vicinity and the constraint this places upon them in their fisheries and trade.”<sup>193</sup> In the event, this enterprise had been hatched in New York rather than Boston, but the results was the same: the raid had left Acadia’s residents incapable of resisting the economic domination of the Bostonians or increasing pressure from the New Yorkers at Pemaquid.<sup>194</sup> When reporting on a range of English violations of

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<sup>192</sup>

Memoir of Jean Talon to Minister of Marine Jean-Baptiste Colbert “On the State of Canada,” 11 September 1671, in E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), p. 75. Talon’s views on and visit to Acadia are discussed in G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, pp. 165-166, and P.F.X. de Chalevoix, History and General Description of New France, 3, p. 187.

<sup>193</sup>

Count Frontenac’s “General Memoire” on the state of Canada in 1674, addressed to Minister of Marine Colbert on 14 November 1674, in E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), pp. 119-120.

<sup>194</sup>

G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, pp. 37-39 discusses the origins of these attacks while their consequences are discussed in P.F.X. de Chalevoix, History and General Description of New France, 3, pp.187-188, and more extensively in Louis-Andre Vigneras, “Letters of an Acadian Trader, 1674-1676,” New England Quarterly, 13 (January 1940), pp. 98-110, especially pp. 100-102.

France's territorial bounds and Acadian waters, in 1681 Frontenac warned that "in consequence of the privation they experience of all sorts of aid from France, and of the assistance they derive from the English, unless your Majesty have [sic!] the goodness to provide therefore, by establishing a Governor there, and giving him the means of subsistence and of applying a remedy to many disorders," England would dominate the region.<sup>195</sup>

By that time numerous other reports were accumulating on New York's expanding territorial claims, on New England's dominance of Acadian commerce and fishing, of the benefits the American colonies might bring to France and, echoing Count Frontenac, of the weakness of French positions there. In 1671, for example, Talon had waxed enthusiastic over the possibilities offered by Acadia "to furnish the salted provisions necessary for their use," but only if Port Royal's existing trade with the Bostonians was severed by the regular supply from France of "some few stuffs to supply the most urgent demands" of the Acadian settlements.<sup>196</sup> Ten years later another Intendant made the same point. Having pointed to the prosperity of the English colonies, he argued that if "Acadia, which belongs to us ..., has similar advantages" its inhabitants had been sadly

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"Report to the King (File No. 424) of Count Frontenac, Quebec, on English Claims and Fishing on Coast of Maine to Ste. Croix River, 2 November, 1681," in E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), p. 148.

<sup>196</sup>

"Memoir of Jean Talon to Minister of Marine Jean-Baptiste Colbert "On the State of Canada," 11 September 1671," in E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), p. 74; Collection de Manuscrits, 1, p. 284.

neglected by Versailles and so “depend altogether for support on the English.” These latter, he warned, “do much more than enhance the value of their own territory; they carry off what we neglect,” and already had “three considerable establishments” in Newfoundland, “which belongs to us, and extend their boundaries as much as possible towards Acadia.”<sup>197</sup> Yet little had changed by 1685 when the Marquis de Denonville, now Governor of New France, complained from Quebec that although French, the Acadian fishery “has been for a long time free to them; it has made them very powerful in our own territory which has scarcely any trade except with them, as it possesses very little with France....”<sup>198</sup>

Furthermore, by the mid-1680s Louis XIV’s officials in North America perceived France’s position as being under a three-pronged English assault. This strategic view of the situation was nicely summed up in 1685 by the experienced soldier and new Governor of Montreal, the Chevalier de Callières. The first prong came from Hudson’s Bay, “the whole of which country they claim as their property,” where the English had destroyed French posts carried off French traders as prisoners.<sup>199</sup> The other two flash

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Intendant du Chesneau’s “Memoir on the Western Indians, etc.,” Quebec, 13 September 1681, in *Ibid.*, p. 205; E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), pp. 165-166. This official also complains of the damage to the French fur trade caused by English activities on the coast of Hudson’s Bay.

<sup>198</sup>

“Memoir of M. de Denonville on the present state of Canada, and the measures to be adopted for the safety of the country,” 12 November 1685, in *Ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>199</sup>

Undated memoir “On the encroachments of the English on the French Colonies in America,” sent from Sieur de Callières to Minister of Marine de Seignelay, c. 1685, in

points meanwhile brought the French into direct conflict with the aggressive Colonel Dongan and his “chimerical pretensions,” as Denonville’s harassed predecessor Governor de la Barre had termed them.<sup>200</sup> On what might be called the central front, when the Quebec governor had declared war on the Iroquois in 1684, Dongan had taken the confederacy under his protection and caused “the Arms of the King of England to be set up in their villages, and to take possession of the latter in his name, as dependencies of his government....” When Barre protested and requested that Dongan not “meddle” in a conflict being waged in territory always recognized as comprising part of New France, the New Yorker “had the boldness to tell his [Barre’s] delegates that not only the country of the Iroquois belonged to his government, but that even the entire Rivers St. Lawrence and Ottawa, and the lakes Frontenac, Champlain and others adjoining, which form almost the whole of New France, were the property of the English.”<sup>201</sup> Since prosecution of the conflict at that time might provoke a general Anglo-French conflict, Barre had

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Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>200</sup>

Extract from a letter from Governor de la Barre to Minister of Marine de Seignelay, Quebec, 14 November 1684, in Ibid., p. 263. Dongan, he notes, claimed “all the country extending from the River St. Lawrence to the South and South West belongs to the King of England, including therein all the country of the Iroquois, and all the vast extent of territory they have depopulated along Lakes Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan, as far as the Illinois, of all which countries the said Colonel has no knowledge nor Map.”

<sup>201</sup>

Undated memoir “On the encroachments of the English on the French Colonies in America,” sent from Sieur de Callières to Minister of Marine de Seignelay, c. 1685, in Ibid., p. 266. F. Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire, provides a concise explanation for English claims of sovereignty over the Iroquois confederacy, and its implications for further claims to Appalachia and the Ohio and upper Mississippi Valleys.

made a hasty peace with the Iroquois that left tribes allied to France unprotected, but requested that the French monarch “write to the king of England to procure a change in the said opinions, or that his Majesty permit me to apply force by land.”<sup>202</sup>

The third and final point of confrontation was the Maine-Acadia borderland. There the most contentious issue were no longer the domination of Massachusetts over Port Royal, but once again the high-handed actions of New York’s Governor Thomas Dongan with regard to the “Messieurs Les francois” then living “among the Indians at Pemaquid.” In early August 1683, he had declared their presence there to be “injurious,” and demanded that they withdraw “into the English plantations belonging to his Royal Highness the Duke of York between the rivers of Quebec [St. Lawrence] and St. Croix,” where he was willing to grant them lands.<sup>203</sup> According to Callieres, in May 1684 the New Yorker wrote to Saint Castin, then “the commandant of Fort Pentagouet in Acadia, and to the other posts occupied by the French as far as the River Kennebeck which separates Acadia from New England,” to claim that his government’s territory “extends to the River St. Croix, which is forty leagues further in Acadia.” Dongan also ordered the “said Sieur de St. Castin and the French who inhabit that district, embracing, between

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Extract from a letter from Governor de la Barre to Minister of Marine de Seignelay, Quebec, 14 November 1684, in *Ibid.*, p. 263. He made a similar request in a memoir sent earlier directly to Louis XIV; *Ibid.*, p. 250. The friction roused by the relations of the New York English *vis-a-vis* the Five Iroquois Nations is discussed in V. Barnes, *The Dominion of New England*, pp. 219-223.

203

“Governor Dongan to the French at Pemaquid,” New York, 3 August 1683,” in in E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 9 (1885), p. 263.

those two Rivers, forty or fifty leagues of the finest Country in all Acadia, to quit it immediately, threatening, in case of refusal, to have them driven off, unless they consent to take the oath of allegiance at his hands to the King of England.” Those who did so, Callières adds, were offered generous land grants as well as the free practice of their religion, and the fact that the Irish Roman Catholic Dongan was accompanied by priests and a Jesuit, rendered “his efforts much the more dangerous.”<sup>204</sup>

Louis XIV was meanwhile unhappy with de la Barre’s treaty with the Iroquois and, considering that official to be too old to act with the necessary vigour, in March 1685 had replaced him as Governor and Lieutenant-General of Canada with the Sieur de Denonville.<sup>205</sup> Chosen because the Sun King was “assured, by his past services and the prudent course he has pursued in his armies, that he will continue to serve him faithfully, and exert himself to reestablish [the] tranquility and repose ... of the Colony,” Denonville’s instructions underline his master’s determination to at last provide military security for his North American colonies. For this purpose, the Iroquois must be “humbled” as the basis for a permanent peace, and the allied native nations assured of French protection, by means of a brief war if necessary. At the same time, the new governor was told that diplomatic steps had been ordered in London to curb Colonel

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Undated memoir “On the encroachments of the English on the French Colonies in America,” sent from Sieur de Callières to Minister of Marine de Seignelay, c. 1685, in *Ibid.*, pp. 265-266; also see G. Lanctot, *History of Canada*, 2, 167.

205

Louis XIV gives this reason in his letter of 10 March 1685 to Intendant de Meulles, in E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*, 9 (1885), p. 269. In informing de la Barre of his decision, however, the king referred to his governor’s age; *Ibid.*

Dongan's "unjust pretensions," and warned that "everything must be done to maintain good understanding between the French and the English." In the case, however, that the New Yorkers continued to "excite and aid the Indians [that is, the Iroquois], they must be treated as enemies when found on Indian territory, without, at the same time, attempting anything on territory under the obedience to the King of England."<sup>206</sup>

Although Governor Barre had offered to use force to enforce French claims to the Iroquois territories in the interior, his successor's survey of the state New France's own defenses can hardly have inspired confidence. "Throughout the entire of New France," Denonville reported in November 1685, "there is not a single redoubt (rédout) except the Castle of Quebec, which, within a few years, resembles only a private establishment, open day and night to every comer, without a single gate capable of being closed." Again, the settlement at Three Rivers had "lofty pallisades, [but] without doors or gates, and without flanks except two large turrets begun last year which are entirely exposed and unfinished." Apart from the enclosed Indian mission on the Mountain, the island of Montreal also lacked any "sign of a redoubt" so that "it may be said with truth, that from River du Loup to the point (la pointe) of the Island of Montreal, a distance of more than one hundred leagues, there is not a solitary spot affording the semblance of shelter from an enemy." Like some Massachusetts authorities after King Philip's War, Denonville therefore recommended that the "first precaution necessary" was "to reassemble the

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"Instructions to the Marquis de Denonville, 10 March 1685," in Ibid., pp. 271-272. The English point of view on this issue is presented at length in V. Barnes, The Dominion of New England, pp. 219-223.

Colony with great care in order to concentrate his forces,” and so permit neighbours to help each other when the need arose. At the same time, “[f]orts, redoubts and retrenchments must not be forgotten, as well for the safety of the inhabitants as for the security of their cattle and other property,” and to prevent the colony was being left “so exposed as it is to the insults of the feeblest enemy that will make his appearance....” As for more distant positions aimed at preserving the fur trade and expeditions against the Iroquois, he recommended strengthening the existing post on Lake Ontario with a twenty-five-foot high wall flanked by two demi-bastions, supported by a lake fleet, and in time a similar establishment on Lake Erie.<sup>207</sup>

Although not using the term “frontier,” Denonville was recommending fortifying New France in the same manner as were France’s own border provinces, and the extension of such fortified posts to his colony’s outer frontiers. In the correspondence of the Chevalier de Callières, however, the application of Vauban’s concept of a fortified “military” frontier becomes explicit. His call for the introduction of current policies into the New World is scarcely surprising given the fact that he had, as he himself put it, served “for 20 years, without intermission, in his Majesty’s glorious campaigns,” and so had “some experience in war superior to that of the officers of this country, who have not been employed for a long time.” Since the colony’s governor-general “cannot be every

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“Memoir of M. de Denonville on the present state of Canada, and the measures to be adopted for the safety of the country,” 12 November 1685, in E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), pp. 280-283. The point here is that rather than holding the enemy at bay by a single interior citadel, or handful of individual citadels, Denonville envisages an integrated chain of strongpoints to hold the frontier against strikes into the interior.



where in so vast an extent of country as that of New France,” he proposed that that official be assigned a military subordinate to command both the recently reinforced regular troops and the colonial militiamen. Callières then requested he be named to this new post on the basis of his own experience as a soldier, and the fact that by holding Montreal as he did, he found himself “on the frontiers of the French Colonies bordering on the Iroquois, and of the English of New England and New York, who are the only enemies to be feared.”<sup>208</sup> And subsequently, when making the strategic review outlined above, he again stressed the frontier concept. Unless the “ill founded pretensions” of the English were vigorously opposed, he warned, they will eventually cause the ruin of our Colonies..., the destruction of which they threaten from three different points.” To prevent this, he concluded, “troops are required in Canada to guard the frontier posts, and to chastise and subdue the Iroquois whom the English uphold against us.”<sup>209</sup>

One direct result of such considerations were France’s revived efforts to reinforce its

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“Chevalier de Callieres to Minister of Marine the Marquis de Seignelay, Montreal, 9 November 1684,” in *Ibid.*, pp. 249-250. Callieres notes the presence of recent reinforcements, whom are at present commanded by the naval captains of the ships on which they arrived. This is because these troops consisted of three companies (2 officers and 50 men) of marines, subsequently renamed the Compagnies franches de la Marine. Raised by the Ministry of the Marine, these troops were intended to serve as colonial garrisons. These first units arrived in North America in Quebec in November 1683, and by 1688 had been supplemented by an additional 32 companies. Their history is outlined in Rene Chartrand, The French Soldier in Colonial America (Bloomfield, Ont.: Museum Restoration Service; 1984), pp. 9-24,

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Undated memoir “On the encroachments of the English on the French Colonies in America,” sent from Sieur de Callieres to Minister of Marine de Seignelay, c. 1685, in E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), p. 268.

positions both in Canada and Acadia. Yet other alternatives remained open and 1686-1689 Paris and London pursued what today we call a “dual-track” approach: by attempting to sever events in Europe from those in the colonies. This was achieved at the diplomatic level by negotiating an agreement to insulate their overall relations from the effects of colonial bickering and skirmishes on the one hand, and relations between the colonies from European conflicts on the other. This reflected the good relations cordial relations existing between the French and English crowns since the conclusion of the Treaty of Dover by Louis XIV and Charles II in 1670, and these despite intensifying colonial friction throughout America from the West Indies to Hudson’s Bay. Such overall relations became closer still when the pro-French and Catholic Duke of York followed his brother Charles on the throne as James II in 1685. Since peace was in the interest of both Louis and James, they undertook negotiations, which lasted from March to November 1686, that led to the Treaty of Whitehall. During these talks the representatives attempted to reconcile the diverging interests of the two powers in North America, the Maine-Acadian borderland included, in what has been called “one of the most explicit expressions of the ‘doctrine of the two spheres,’ which had long played various roles in international relations regarding America” in other, earlier agreements and treaties.<sup>210</sup>

In accord with this principle, the two powers long had recognized that the conditions governing their relations and colonial policies in America differed from those

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M.Savelle, Origins of American Diplomacy, p. 108, and on the negotiations of the treaty, Ibid., pp. 105-108; J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, pp. 179-180.

predominating in Europe, so that European peace settlements often were accepted as not necessarily being applicable in the colonies. By this treaty they now explicitly accepted that America was "a sphere formally acknowledged to be free from the vicissitudes of European politics, which would also, it was hoped, be free of intercolonial strife." As signed and quickly ratified at Whitehall in November 1686, the so-called "Treaty of American Neutrality" confirmed the Treaty of Breda of 1667, proclaimed a state of peace and friendship between the two kingdoms in both North and South America, and stipulated that neither side's troops or ships would injure either the American territories or subjects of the other. To ensure that the guarantee of neutrality would not mean that either side lost position, Article 2 of this treaty provided that "each king shall have and retain for himself all dominions, rights, and prerogatives in the seas, straits, or other waters of America, with the same amplitude which belongs to each by right and in the same manner in which he now enjoys them." Each also was to abstain from fishing and trading in the other's territory, but ships seeking shelter in the bays or rivers were to receive a friendly reception. Apart from special arrangements concerning St. Christopher and the Cayman Islands, the treaty included measures to regulate ships with letters of marque and for suppressing piracy. Finally, any future Anglo-French rupture in Europe was to have no effect in America, where the two countries' subjects were to continue "in the same manner as if no such rupture had occurred" and, similarly, conflicts between their subjects in America were not to serve as a casus belli in Europe.<sup>211</sup>

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M. Savelle, Origins of American Diplomacy, pp. 107-108, the quotations being from the treaty text. J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 179, maintains that the statement of the principle of neutrality "was a recognition that the respective European

At the time of negotiations, for the European courts the Acadian skirmishes were of minor significance when compared to those in the West Indies or Hudson's Bay, or the conflict then developing on the interior borderland of New York and Quebec, the territory of the Iroquois Confederacy.<sup>212</sup> Even so, John Reid points out that by providing "a minimal framework within which to contain potential conflicts," the Whitehall Treaty served briefly as a "major safeguard against the outbreak of violence on a catastrophic scale" in the Maine-Acadian borderland. True, by merely reaffirming the provisions of adopted at Breda it remained "vague and unsatisfactory in a number of respects," left the issue of demarcating a boundary between the English and French unresolved, as well as the controversies over fishing in Acadian waters. In this last regard, for example, the New Englanders' right to fish beyond the immediate offshore waters was negated by a prohibition on drying their catches on shore. This naturally caused considerable concern, not to say irritation, among the leaders of Massachusetts, especially since the treaty provided no mechanism for settling disputes. Yet as the French representatives in London pointed out to James II, although it might seem preferable "to regulate the limits of the lands which each of the two nations should possess," and to make the home governments responsible for all violations, "experience has shown that those who command act more often according to their own particular

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crowns had an interest in ensuring the survival of their American colonies, in the northeastern region as elsewhere."

<sup>212</sup>

This attitude is reflected in the minimal attention devoted by P.F.X. de Charlevoix to events in the Acadian border zone as compared to the French-Iroquois-New Yorker rivalry in the interior, or even to the struggle for Hudson's Bay ; see his History and General Description of New France, 3, Books x-xi; 4, Books xii-xiii.

interest than according to the general good and the advantage of the colonies.” In other words, Paris and London hoped to impress upon their respective colonial governors that regardless of the circumstances, their monarchs intended to remain at peace and would judge their subordinates accordingly.<sup>213</sup>

Naomi Griffiths sees in this treaty evidence of “the growing attention that was being accorded colonial matters” by both governments, and suggests that it demonstrates that while the latter recognized the importance of demarcated borders for any secure peace, it also “marked the beginning of a slow realization ... that the problems of North America were of a different order than those posed by dissident regions within each European realm.”<sup>214</sup> But if the treaty’s practical significance was at best limited, the very fact of its signing still makes it obvious that neither crown regarded the ongoing reinforcement and reorganization of its regional military presence as a prelude to an imminent war. Rather, it aimed at reducing tensions and to a degree, it was successful. For example, in August 1687 Captain Frances Nicolson, the representative and deputy of Sir Edmund Andros, who had returned in December 1686 as governor of James II’s newly created Dominion of New England, travelled in Port Royal to obtain the release of a fishing ketch seized in Acadian waters by the French frigate Friponne. Although he failed, he did use the

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<sup>213</sup>

Ibid., pp. 179-180. In this last regard, Reid quotes the remark made by Governor Denonville of New France to his rival Dongan of New York that the treaty made “les Intentions de nos Maistres” the overriding consideration in any colonial negotiations. The treaty’s impact (or lack thereof) on the Acadian fishing issue is discussed in G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, pp. 48-49.

<sup>214</sup>

N.E.S. Griffiths, From Migrant to Acadian, p. 136.

Whitehall Treaty's provisions to obtain the French warship captain's admission that "he had positive Orders from he King his Master strictly to Observe the Treaty, and to assist any English Shipp or Vessell that desired his helpe" and thereafter, the seizure of New England vessels ceased until war broke out in 1689.<sup>215</sup> Yet as Samuel Johnson would observe some eighty years later, "powerful colonies, enflamed with immemorial rivalry, and placed under of the superintendence of the mother nations, were not likely to be long at rest." So despite the treaty, situations remained in which "some mischief was every day done or meditated, and the borderers were always better pleased with what they could snatch from their neighbours, than what they had of their own."<sup>216</sup> But despite conflict on these colonial borders, in the end it was Louis XIV's invasion of the Rhineland of September 1688, and William II's declaration of war in May 1689, that plunged both Europe and North America into a full-scale war, and not the colonial governors of New York and New France, however high-handed, provocative and openly aggressive were their actions.<sup>217</sup>

### **France's Acadian Frontier**

Apart from a program for action to defend New France on the St. Lawrence, during the

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<sup>215</sup>Quoted in J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 177.

<sup>216</sup>

Samuel Johnson, The Political Writings of Dr. Johnson: A Selection, ed. J.P. Hardy (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1968), p. 25.

<sup>217</sup>

Paul Sonnino, "The Origins of Louis XIV's Wars," Jeremy Black, ed., The Origins of War in Early Modern Europe (Edinburgh: John Donald; 1987), pp. 124-126; Jeremy Black, The rise of the European Powers, 1679-1793 (London: Edward Arnold; 1990), pp. 39-42.

1680s Louis XIV also ordered steps to develop the long distressed colony of Acadia so as to secure all possible resulting profits -- especially those from its celebrated fishery -- which now began to assume greater importance for the French Crown. Rather than intervening directly, at the end of February 1682 the king followed a precedent used in Canada in 1663, and earlier: he authorized the creation of the new monopolistic trading enterprise in the form of the Acadia Sedentary Fishing Company. This was to serve both state and commerce by securing France's political position while simultaneously promoting the colony's economic future. Clerbaud Bergier, a Huguenot merchant from La Rochelle, took immediate charge of operations in Acadia. Arriving in mid-1682, he built Fort St. Louis at Chedabucto (today's Guysborough), which by 1685 had two buildings within a narrow enclosure that mounted four cannon, as the base for a year-round fishery involving a thirty-ton barque and fifteen fishing shallops.<sup>218</sup>

From the first Bergier faced the hostility of the New Englanders. They rightly suspected that his company intended to exclude them from the Acadian waters which many were exploiting with licences from Michel Leneuf de la Vallière, Frontenac's

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Beamish Murdoch, A History of Nova Scotia or Acadie, 3 vols. (Halifax, NS: James Barnes; 1865-1867), 1, p. 164. Louis XIV had granted the new company fishing and hunting rights; a strip of shoreline (12 leagues long and 6 leagues wide) between Canso and Cape Rouge on which it was to establish a fishing as well as a fish-drying station; the privilege of trading, free of all import and export duties, with the other French colonies and islands in America; exemptions from import and export duties, such as the salt tax; and payments of 1000 livres annually for each vessel sent to the fishery. Bergier himself had departed with 18 men and one woman, and was soon joined at the fort at Chedabucto by an additional ten men and another female. In 1683 they planted flax, hemp, peas, fruit trees and grape vines; Collection de Manuscrits, 1, p. 290-295, 304-306, 329-330. Also see G. Lanctot, History of Canada, I2, pp. 169-170; J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 176; and N.E.S. Griffiths, From Migrant to Acadian, pp. 121-122..

commandant of Acadia since 1678.<sup>219</sup> Returning to France for the winter of 1682-1683, Bergier complained to the Minister of Marine that “the coast [of Acadie] would be entirely ruined by the English if a prompt remedy were not applied, and that this situation has been caused by the right of entry to our ports given to them [the English] for money by the man named La Valiere [sic !] from Quebec, which he did on his own authority and without any orders from His Majesty.”<sup>220</sup> And to obtain this “prompt remedy,” the Acadia Company’s investors formally requested “instead of the favours which they may expect, a frigate of 8 to 10 guns which they offer to maintain at their expense to defend them from the people of Baston.”<sup>221</sup> Although deprived of this reinforcement, the company’s relations with the Massachusetts fishers went from bad to worse when the latter responded forcibly to its aggressive policies off southern Nova Scotia during 1683. To begin with, six Acadian vessels commissioned by the company from Port Royal were seized by Captain William Carter of Salem, who had held a licence from Valliere a year earlier. Indeed, even the company’s fort at Chedabucto was threatened while the Boston fishing smacks continued to violate French waters with

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This figure’s somewhat checkered career, and his problems with the Acadia Sedentary Fishing Company, are outlined briefly by J.-Roger Comeau in G. W. Brown, Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2, pp. 409-411. For the details of la Valliere’s activities in Acadia and conflict with Bergier, see N.E.S. Griffiths, From Migrant to Acadian, pp. 116-124.

<sup>220</sup>

J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, pp. 259-260, n. 63. This is his translation of a letter from Bergier to Minister of Marine Seignelay in 1682 on p. 176. The working of the licencing system by which the French attempted to regulate the Acadian fishery is described in G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, pp. 42-46.

<sup>221</sup>

“Acadie Memoir, 1682,” Collection de Manuscrits, 1, p. 290.



impunity. Outraged, Bergier rejected any pragmatic compromise with Valliere, who in that year had become Acadia's governor as well as commandant <sup>222</sup> Instead, he demanded vigorous measures to expel the New England interlopers and again asked that the company be assigned a small frigate to enforce its exclusive rights vis-à-vis the New Englanders. <sup>223</sup>

Unfortunately for Vallière, his patron Frontenac's credit now had fallen in court circles, Bergier's complaints found willing listeners, and in March 1684 Louis XIV barred all foreigners from fishing and trading in Acadian waters. A copy of this order was sent to Boston with the warning that ships found trespassing would be seized forthwith. In April the king then stripped Valliere of his official powers, that of issuing fishing licences included, and instead commissioned Bergier as his royal lieutenant in Acadia for three years, along with full powers until the arrival of François-Marie Perrot as the new governor. A nephew of former Intendant Jean Talon, Perrot had recently been removed by Frontenac as governor of Montreal for insubordination and illicit trading. Even so, his new commission now recognized "his experience ... and the loyalty he had displayed in that post" and, although it instructed him to ensure the expulsion

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<sup>222</sup>

G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, p. 170, considers Bergier's demands on la Valliere to be "unreasonable."

<sup>223</sup>

B. Murdoch, History of Nova Scotia or Acadie, 1, pp. 161-162, identifies the vessel in question as the 130-ton la Friponne, and records that the Company offered "to furnish all sailors, provisions and expenses for four years, without calling on the government for anything" but "the authority to capture and confiscate all English vessels, trading, fishing or taking coal on th coasts of Acadie, or the alternative of imposing a tax or duty on them, as Valliere had done." Whether or not this indeed was precisely the vessel requested, a frigate of that name was dispatched to serve the next governor.

from Acadia of all English interests,<sup>224</sup> this was only one aspect of a more general program. This is clear from the instructions issued Denonville a year later, which read:

Independent of the establishment the French have made along the bank of the River St. Lawrence, a part of Acadia is still occupied by them; and as advices have been received that the English were seizing several posts which have always been occupied by the French, his Majesty desires that he [Denonville] inform himself of this particular, and send also to the Governor of Boston to explain the points to which the bounds of the French domination extend, and to request of him to confine himself within the limits belonging to the English, according to the orders given him by the late King of England, the renewal of which his Majesty will request from the reigning Monarch.

Noting that Denonville was aware that Louis XIV had assigned “government of the country of Acadia” to Perrot, these instructions added that this last official would “be notified to proceed thither immediately after having received Sieur de Denonville’s orders as to what he has to do with his government, whereof his Majesty requires that he [Perrot] render him an account as often as possible, and that he keep up a correspondence with the said Sieur de Denonville.”<sup>225</sup>

The French king also hoped that relations between his two colonies would be facilitated by a tour of Acadia and visit to Port Royal by the Canadian Intendant Jacques de Meulles, in accord with the instructions he “will receive from his Majesty by the first

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<sup>224</sup>

Ibid.; J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 176; Collection de Manuscripts, 1, pp. 321-22, 323.

<sup>225</sup>

“Instructions to the Marquis de Denonville, 10 March 1685,” in E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), p. 272.

vessels proceeding to Canada.”<sup>226</sup> Thus charged, de Meulles departed Quebec on 11 October 1685 and, after being shipwrecked on Miscou Island in early November, reached Miramichi in mid-month. He then pushed down the coast to winter at Beaubassin (Chignecto). During April-May 1686 he traveled to explore the mouth of the St. John (Jean) River, called on Perrot at Port Royal in April-May 1686 and, having crossed overland to Isle du Rossignol (Coffin Island, Liverpool), then cruised up the coast to Lahave, Chibouctou, Canso, and Chedabuctou, St. Pierre in Cape Breton, and Isle Percee on New Brunswick’s North Shore. Meulles finally arrived back in Quebec in early July having been, he reported, “fortunate in being able to execute all the projects I had formed before leaving Quebec,” and having prepared maps of the points visited.<sup>227</sup> Echoing Denonville advice with regard to Canada, Meulles insisted that if France was to realize the advantages offered by this region, “it was necessary to settle and fortify Port Royal and to build a good fort at Pentagouet, in order to serve as a barrier for Acadia against the English.” In other words, he believed a start should be made on staking out a true southwest boundary for Acadia in the contested borderland, and on converting the region into a fortified frontier zone. For, he continued, “if with this something could be expended on Port de la Heve, on the Island of Cape Breton, Isle Percee, and in fortifying Placentia, in Newfoundland, which ... then ... was too weak too weak to defend in case

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<sup>226</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>227</sup>

Jacques de Meulles, “Account of the Voyage of Monsieur de Meulles to Acadie, 1685-1686,” in William Inglis Morse, comp. and ed., Acadiensia Nova, 2 vols. (London: Author-Bernard Quaritch; 1935), 1, pp. 85-131.

of attack, France would be sole mistress of the cod fisheries.” In implementing this program, Meulles believed that “it was advisable that his majesty should incur all the expenses, and not farm out the fisheries too soon,” but only later recover his costs by this course.<sup>228</sup>

In the interim, since Perrot himself had only arrived to take up his new post in September 1685, during 1684 this task of enforcing French sovereignty in Acadia left to Bergier alone.<sup>229</sup> Although he still lacking the requested frigate, he immediately launched a serious campaign against foreign fishers with the Acadia Company’s barque St. Louis. Cruising off Cape Sable, he seized seven fishing ketches and a sloop, with which he returned (along with their captains) to La Rochelle. Despite his assertions to the contrary, officials in Boston complained that Bergier acting “without ever publishing his pretensions or power, or giving any time or opportunity for the vessels to depart and carry away their fish, hath surprized and carried away eight or nine of our Ketches.”<sup>230</sup>

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P.F.X. de Charlevoix, paraphrasing a letter of de Meulles, who had been recalled to France in disgrace, dated 18-19 July 1687, History and General Description of New France, 3, p. 295. For a brief biography of de Meulles by W.J. Eccles see G.W. Brown, et al., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2, pp. 470-473, while the differing territorial conceptions accorded to the term “Acadia” are discussed in A.H. Clark, Acadia, pp. 71-74.

229

In addition to the other authorities cited, see C. Bruce Fergusson’s biography of Bergier, and W.J. Eccles of Perrot, in G.W. Brown, et al., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1: 1000-1700 (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1966), pp. 89-90, and 540-542, respectively.

230

This passage is from a letter sent to the English authorities in September 1684 as quoted in J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 176, and the incident in question is discussed in detail in G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, pp. 46-47. He points out the somewhat puzzling fact that despite the 100 Massachusetts vessels fishing in

Furthermore, since these events occurred during the interregnum between the abrogation Massachusetts Charter and arrival of Andros as the new royal governor, the colony's angry mariners were free to wage an aggressive maritime war aimed at destroying the Acadia Company and restoring the dominance of Massachusetts over the Acadian fishery and the associated trade.<sup>231</sup> Their counter-offensive at sea opened in 1685 and from the Acadia Company's viewpoint, the results were devastating. Initially at least, the New Englanders seem to have regarded the barque St. Louis to be too powerful to attack. Instead, they harassed all the smaller French fishing vessels encountered and in August, off of Cape Breton, a Bostonian privateer commanded by one Williams captured four, at least one of which was a ketch of the Acadia Company. While it was taken as a prize, the other three were "pillaged" and their hulls left to rot on the coastline near Chedabucto.<sup>232</sup>

The situation had so deteriorated that on landing at the station there in September,

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Acadian waters, all those seized were from New Hampshire. Of these last, the French Admiralty Court confiscated all but the two whose captains presented licences from Valliere.

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G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 47.

232

Extract from the "Report (File No. 616) on the Damage Inflicted by the English on Acadia Submitted by Governor Perrot to the Minister, Marquis de Seignelay, Chedabouctou, Acadian Coast, 8 September, 1685," as quoted in "English Invasions of French Possessions in America, 21 April, 1723," in E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), p. 918; "Account of the Voyage of Monsieur de Meulles in Acadie, 1685-1686," p. 118. Although the St. Louis had eluded Williams, John Reid cites a later report of the Acadia Company that it had lost a 25-ton barque to the Massachusetts mariners; J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 176.

Perrot felt it necessary to report that if “this be not corrected, the trade of that coast runs the risk of being wholly interrupted, as the English are roving about every day, and scouring these coasts in order to derive profit both from fishing and trading.”<sup>233</sup> On reaching Port Royal, which had been restored as the colonial capital in 1683, he later wrote that he found the New Englanders already established with “stores of goods there as openly as if they were affording the same privilege to the French in their country.” Having billeted the thirty soldiers of the Troupes de la Marine who accompanied him among the handful of inhabitants, Perrot himself rented a house to serve as the governor’s residence. With this petty force Perrot established France’s first permanent garrison in Acadia, which was to defend the colony in general, and Port Royal and Fort St. Louis in particular.<sup>234</sup> While he somewhat piously pledged that if it still be thought desirable that he follow his instructions to expel the intruding New England fishers and traders, he would “do so with all his power,” he clearly felt that this goal was impracticable.<sup>235</sup> Otherwise, since Port Royal’s fortifications were in ruins, those of the Acadia Company’s weak outpost at Chedabuctou were the peninsula’s only

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<sup>233</sup>

Extract from the “Report (File No. 616) on the Damage Inflicted by the English on Acadia Submitted by Governor Perrot to the Minister of Marine,” p. 918.

<sup>234</sup>

The service of the Compagnies franches de la Marine in Acadia is outlined in R. Chartrand, The French Soldier in Colonial America, pp. 14-16. On Perrot’s establishment in Port Royal, see Brenda Dunn, A History of Port-Royal/ Annapolis Royal, 1605-1800 (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing with Annapolis Royal Historical Society; 2004), pp. 29-30.

<sup>235</sup>

Extract from the “Report (File No. 616) on the Damage Inflicted by the English on Acadia Submitted by Governor Perrot to the Minister of Marine,” p. 918.

“stronghold.” But rather than rebuild the former, Perrot requested that he himself be granted a large seigneurie, with full proprietary rights, stretching along Nova Scotia’s southern Atlantic shore from Port Rossignol (Liverpool) to La Heve. As well as the funds, materiel and cannon needed to rebuild and arm a fort at the latter site, he asked for a ten gun corvette, a coastal pilot, and an additional fifty soldiers (15 seamen included) for a garrison maintained at the Crown’s expense, as well as a missionary and the right to impress vagrants to be forcibly settled on his lands.<sup>236</sup>

Paris turned down this proposal, but Perrot may have hoped to reverse that decision by his memorandum on 9 August 1686 which suggested the creation of “a large and strong establishment on the coast” to forestall the English.<sup>237</sup> At the very least, he urged, the government must commit an estimated 2000 crowns for the construction “of a tower and redoubt” to guard the entrance to the Port Royal basin (today’s Digby Gut), as well another redoubt at Port Royal itself, along with palisades to surround the governor’s house, part of the barracks and storehouses.<sup>238</sup> Despite these efforts, some later writers consider that his professions to the contrary, in Port Royal Perrot simply lived up to the reputation he had earned earlier in Montreal. The “result of this appointment was what might have been expected,” writes Quebec historian Gustave Lanctot. Shortly after his

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“Precis of a memoir of Perrot, 1685,” in Collections de Manuscripts, 1, p. 348; summary in B. Murdoch, History of Nova Scotia, 1, pp. 165-166; N.E.S. Griffiths, From Migrant to Acadia, 135

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J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 176.

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B. Murdoch, History of Nova Scotia, 1, p. 167.

Perrot's arrival, Lanctot, points out, he declared "that the colony 'could not yet get along without the English,'" began granting them fishing permits despite the prohibition of 1684, and set up business on his own account, even measuring out 'in his own house, under the eyes of the foreigners, his pints and half-pints of brandy.'" These abuses, this historian continues, "reduced the little colony's economy to such a pitiable state that in March 1687 he was dismissed from his post, but, quite undaunted, the shameless profiteer settled in the colony and continued his lucrative traffic with Boston."<sup>239</sup>

Such judgements are perhaps somewhat harsh. Whatever the sincerity of Perrot's professed willingness to make a stand if so ordered, he himself obviously believed that in the circumstances, he had little choice but to make the best of an already bad situation. The charges of Bergier and others are not without merit, but they ignore the imperatives of the borderland life in which Perrot operated. If nothing else, Bergier's own actions had demonstrated the impossibility of ejecting the "Bostonians" by force and made him, at least in the eyes of Minister Seignelay's correspondent at Fort St. Louis in Chedabucto, solely responsible for the Acadia Company's failure.<sup>240</sup> As the weaker

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G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, pp. 170-171, who quotes are from a range of published memoirs complaining about Perrot's term as governor. W.J. Eccles, in the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1, 541-542, agrees: that Perrot "lost no time in seeking to monopolize the fur trade of the colony, traded brandy over the counter of his own house, shipped contraband to Boston and, in complete disregard for the king's orders, allowed New England fishermen to fish in Acadian coastal waters upon purchasing a permit, for which he charged L5 per ketch." On being dismissed in April 1687, Perrot "remained in Acadia and continued his malpractices, despite warnings from the minister to desist or learn what it meant to incur the king's serious displeasures."

<sup>240</sup>

Robert Challes, Un colonial au temps de Colbert: Memoirs de Robert Challes, écrivain du roi, ed. A. Augustin-Thierry (Paris: Libraire Plon; 1931), p. 274.



party, and with material support from France being at best episodic, unreliable and insufficient, Perrot had little choice but to depend on New England for the supplies needed by his garrison and Acadia's inhabitants. In this light it might well appear that by his proposed Plan for Acadia (c. 1686), Perrot sought to turn the existing circumstances to France's advantage while maintaining a vestige of authority and profit for the Crown. Rather than waste his limited strength in fruitless efforts to expel the New Englanders, he suggested possible schemes to permit their continued fishing, but to turn their activities to Acadia's advantage. If nothing else, the purchase of licences by New England fishers maintained the near fiction of French sovereignty which the Massachusetts General Court had recognized on the occasion of Frontenac's complaints in 1682. Similarly, the colony could profit from his willingness to permit them to dry their fish along the Acadian coast, free of duty, if this was tied to his requirement that the New Englanders then exchange these same fish for French goods at a rate set by the latter.<sup>241</sup> And given the poor support Paris accorded its representatives in this distant borderland, the monies acquired through such practices may indeed have been essential for their maintenance.

This aspect of the new governor's problems are highlighted by the issues raised by John Nelson, Saint-Castin, and the lack of boundaries between England and France in the Maine borderland. In this case the culprits were not New England fishers and traders, but New York's high-handed Governor Dongan. We have seen he had been harassing

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B. Murdoch, History of Nova Scotia or Acadie, 1, p. 166; J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 176; G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 48.

the “Messieurs Les francois” living among the Abenaki since the summer of 1683. Saint-Castin, however, ignored the New Yorkers’ pretensions and continued his profitable trading activities while Perrot’s detractors fault him for expressing appreciation over the role of John Nelson, Saint-Castin’s Boston partner and a bete noire of the Acadia Company. Writing in August 1686, for example, Perrot reported that Nelson “has always traded on this coast, and who has done much good among the inhabitants through the large loans which he has made to them in their greatest need.”<sup>242</sup> Significantly, this comment appeared in a lengthy report regarding the seizure that summer by two New York agents, apparently on that governor’s orders, on a store of supplies and a cargo of wine, along with the vessel Johanna that Nelson had despatched to Saint-Castin on the Penobscot, on the grounds that since the border ran along the St. Croix River, duty should be paid at Pemaquid. At the same time, be it from motives of personal animus or commercial rivalry, Perrot was much less sympathetic towards Saint-Castin, whom he suggested had caused many of his own troubles and done nothing to hinder the New Yorkers’ action.<sup>243</sup> Other motives aside, this attitude may well reflect the governor’s irritation with an unruly borderer whose activities he could not control, but

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<sup>242</sup>

Perrot’s letter to Minister of the Marine Seignelay, 29 August 1686, Collections de Manuscripts, 2, 367; translated quote from J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New England, p. 176.

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N.E.S. Griffiths, From Migrant to Acadian, p. 137; “Letter to Minister of Marine Seignelay, 29 August 1686,” extracted in Collection de Manuscripts, 1, p. 367; John Clarence Webster, ed., Acadia at the End of the Seventeenth Century. Letters, Journals and Memoirs of Joseph Robineau Villebon, Commandant in Acadia, 1690-1700 (Saint John, NB: New Brunswick Museum; 1934), pp. 188, 193.

whose interests as a French subject he was bound to uphold. And Perrot did make a formal protest over the seizure to New York's Governor Thomas Dongan on the grounds that the Pentagouet region was French in accord with terms of the Treaty of Breda.<sup>244</sup>

In October Dongan replied arrogantly that to the best of his knowledge, nothing "has been done to the French on their territories," and warned that if "you remain on the soil of the King of England's province, you cannot expect peace, nor can I give you any satisfaction." More astounding still was Dongan's bald assertion that it was the French who had violated the pending Neutrality Treaty (see above) "by resting on the King of England's ground, and so this is all I shall answer to your letter, though I remain your obedient servant...."<sup>245</sup> Since the negotiations in question had accepted the boundary provisions of Breda, Dongan's closing comment must have been especially galling to a frustrated Perrot. But with no naval vessel and a mere thirty soldiers, described as "ill clad and provided,"<sup>246</sup> the latter had no means of responding with force. This weak posture was hardly calculated to discourage the New Yorker's expanding claims for a

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<sup>244</sup>

G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 48; P.F.X. de Charlevoix, History and General Description of New France, 2, p. 211, where the vessel involved is identified as the Jane.

<sup>245</sup>

"Letter from Governor Thomas Dongan to Perrot, 6 October 1686," in Ibid., 1, pp. 369-371; N.E.S. Griffiths, From Migrant to Acadian, p. 139. An Irish Catholic, Colonel Dongan had arrived in New York in late August 1683 to replace Andros, who had been recalled to answer charges of corruption and illegal training with the Dutch. In the event, he was exonerated.

<sup>246</sup>

W.A. Calnek, History of the County of Annapolis including Old Port Royal and Acadia..., ed. and completed A.W. Savary (Toronto, Ont.: Thomas Briggs; 1891), p. 34, fn.

Maine-Acadia boundary that they now set along the St. Croix River, and from its headwaters on to the Canada River or St. Lawrence.<sup>247</sup> While restitution was finally made, Edward Randolph noted regarding the raids on Saint-Castin in 1686 that "there will be I fear an eruption betwixt the French of Nova Scotia and our people of Mayne and New Hampshire."<sup>248</sup>

However one judges Perrot's tenure, his arrival in Acadia undoubtedly opened "a period of transition for Acadia, between what might be called the period of neighbourhood politics and the era of major colonial strife between France and England in North America,"<sup>249</sup> and corresponded to efforts on both sides to establish a permanent and effective military presence within the region, efforts which would create a militarized frontier region. Or put differently, by the mid-1680s the construction of Andros' fort at Pemaquid, along with tensions roused by New York's initiatives in the Iroquois and Maine borderlands, as well as the French-New England rivalries in Acadian waters, seemingly had convinced Louis XIV's officials of the need to create a true frontier of the type suggested by Meulles. Meanwhile, the Acadia Company's complaints about Perrot had convinced Louis XIV in April 1687 to replace him as governor in with the professional soldier Louis-Alexandre Des Friches de Meneval, an officer who was

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The expanding claims of the New Yorkers at this time are noted in J.G. Reid, Acadie, Maine and New Scotland, p. 180.

<sup>248</sup>

Quoted in Ibid. The Johanna incident is described in some detail in Richard R. Johnson, John Nelson, Merchant Adventurer: A Life Between Empires (New York and Oxford: Oxford University; 1991), pp. 41-43.

<sup>249</sup>N.E.S. Griffiths, From Migrant to Acadian, p. 135.

“loved and esteemed” by of the celebrated Marshal Vicomte de Turenne.<sup>250</sup> Both the new governor’s instructions, and the larger salary (plus gratuity) underline the monarch’s seriousness in placing a reorganized colony on a firm administrative, economic and demographic basis. These clearly designated the Kennebec as Acadia’s frontier, from which the colony was described as extending vaguely to the northeast so as to include Cape Breton and the Gaspé. Within these bounds, de Meneval was to end the sale of licences to foreigners and prohibit their fishing and trading along the coasts, for which purpose he was assigned a frigate from France. Apart from restoring the colony’s internal peace and promoting its prosperity through the Acadia Company, these same instructions also announced the crown’s intent to “have the fort at Port Royal repaired, or to construct a new one at whatever place shall be found most suitable,” of earth with fascines and turf rather one revetted by masonry.<sup>251</sup>

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Quotes from the company’s memorandum as cited in Ibid., p. 177, and G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, p. 171. Des Friches de Meneval’s Canadian career is detailed in Rene Baudry’s biographical sketch in G.W. Brown, et al., eds., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2, pp. 182-184.

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“The King’s Instructions to Sieur de Meneval, 10 April 1687,” in Collections de Manuscripts, 1, pp. 396-398. Translations from J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 177; also see G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, p. 171, and B. Murdoch, History of Nova Scotia, 1, pp. 173-174. According to Francis Nicholson’s report to Clerk of the Privy Council William Blathwayt in London, dated 5 September 1697, as quoted in G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, p. 54, at this time the “Towne” Port Royal stood “upon a Small neck of Land about a mile round,” with “the ruine of an Earthern Fortification (formerly destroyed by the English).” He doubted that “there were 80 families as belonging to ye place” and reported a garrison that comprised “about 40 Soldiers whereof tenn were old ones, the rest [having] came in the man of Warr.” But he added that they “had there before only three old Guns, but now [had] brought 15 very fine and large ones,” although “where they make their Fortification I could not learn.” Andros, now Governor of New England, had ordered him to Port Royal to negotiate the

Two officers – one Gargas, a recording clerk in the Marine Ministry, and the other the Sieur de Miramont, who was to command the troops of the garrison – preceded Meneval from La Rochelle on the naval transport La Bretonne. They first landed at Chedabuctou and there left reinforcements, supplies and pay sufficient until January 1688 with Sieur de la Boulay, now the King’s Lieutenant in Acadia. They then sailed on to Port Royal in the light, sixteen-gun frigate La Friponne with another thirty soldiers, as well as cannon, munitions and 4000 livres for work on reconstructing the town’s dilapidated fortifications.<sup>252</sup> These landed, that warship took up station off the coast to enforce the ban on foreign fishers and traders in Acadian waters in early August.<sup>253</sup> Gargas and Miramont meanwhile set about restoring the small garrison’s morale by issuing arrears in pay and new clothing as needed, placed the munitions and cannon in storage, and set out to explore the district by canoe.<sup>254</sup> Governor Meneval himself had followed them on an Acadia Company vessel to Chedabuctou, remained there until picked by the La Friponne, and only reached his “capital” at the beginning of October

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release of two Salem fishing boats seized by la Friponne.

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De Gargas, “Sojourn of Gargas in Acadie, 1687-1688,” in W.I. Morse, ed., Acadiensia Nova, 1, pp. 165-166; Rene Baudry in G.W. Brown, et al., eds., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2, p.184. Gargas lists le Boulay’s Chedabuctou garrison as comprising 1 corporal, 1 sub-officer and 10 soldiers from the arrivals, and two men from the former garrison, all of whom he claims he had clothed, paid and armed.

253

N.E.S. Griffiths, From Migrant to Acadian, p. 140.

254

De Gargas, “Sojourn of Gargas in Acadie,” pp. 165-166. Unfortunately, a misunderstanding between Miramont’s sentry who was guarding the canoe, and its Acadian owner, led to a dispute that when it was brought before de Meneval, poisoned relations between the new governor and his two subordinates; Ibid., pp. 169-170.

1687. Having briefly examined Perrot's books and the state of the garrison, which still lacked "a sergeant, a corporal and a sub-officer," he took steps to regularize the soldiers' pay and settled them among the Acadians for whom they were permitted to work.<sup>255</sup>

Otherwise, Meneval left the munitions and cannon in storage since it was too late in the season to begin refurbishing what fortifications remained, and because he wondered whether he might not construct a new fort at Pentagouet on the Penobscot, or on the St. George River, so as to better uphold France's territorial claims. In early December 1687 he reported on these alternatives, and on the failings of his subordinates, to the minister and other superiors in France. In response, la Friponne returned in 1688 with the military engineer Pasquine, as de Meneval had requested, who was to draw up plans for a new fort. With him arrived the judicial official Mathieu de Goutin, the officer Soulegre, who was to be captain of the troops, and an additional thirty soldiers to increase the garrison to ninety Troupes de la Marine. Of these, twenty were assigned to the Acadia Company's Fort St. Louis, and the rest remained billeted with residents in Port Royal.<sup>256</sup> Yet the

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<sup>255</sup>

Gargas noted that the governor borrowed from the 4000 pounds intended for building fortifications for "the maintenance of the troops after January 1688 until the arrival of the king's frigate," after which he replaced the monies spent, "for he had no other means of supporting them." But he objected that this was only necessary since de Meneval needlessly insisted on paying his men, even after they had been billeted "for four-months "leave" with residents, and this became one of the issues of contention between the two officials;" see "Sojourn of Gargas in Acadie," p. 173.

<sup>256</sup>

R. Baudry in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2, p. 182. B. Dunn, History of Port Royal/Annapolis Royal, pp. 30-31, who mistakenly suggests the extra sixty arrived during the tenure of Perrot; and R. Chartrand, The French Soldier in Colonial America, pp. 14-15, who notes that in 1687 25 soldiers were sent to Placentia in Newfoundland as well..

impact of such meager reinforcements had been largely nullified by a “pirate” expedition that had departed Boston in that July. Avoiding la Friponne which was then returning to Port Royal in August 1688, these New Englanders had managed to pillage Canso and capture the Acadia Company’s Saint Louis, along with the annual shipment of supplies from France to Acadia. Furious and humiliated, Meneval had blamed the disaster on the frigate’s captain, who in turn claimed he was simply following the governor’s orders, thus adding to the disputes wracking Port Royal’s colonial administration.<sup>257</sup> But despite this attack, France responded by diplomatic means alone and Meneval would receive no further reinforcements. As a result, he had a mere ninety men to defend the whole of Acadia from Cape Breton to the Kennebec when England’s new King William of Orange declared war on France in May 1689.

All in all, then, the pessimistic tone of Meneval’s autumn report of 1688 is hardly surprising. The high cost of living, shortages of flour and insufficient numbers of workers aside, he reported that some of his troops were old and no longer capable of service, that the muskets of those who had arrived in 1687 were defective, and that the thirty of 1688 had only seventeen weapons between them. As a result, at any given moment, almost half of his men remained unarmed. In addition, he maintained the

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N.E. Griffiths, From Migrant to Acadia, pp. 148-149; G. Lanctot, History of Canada. 2, p. 172. Francis Nicolson reported to London on 31 August 1688 that apart from devastating the Acadia Company’s sedentary fishery, at Canso the English pirate raiders had seized a trading vessel belonging to Saint-Castin, “coming from Quebecke, loaded with provisions, and merchandise, to the value of five hundred pounds;” J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, pp. 180-181, and G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Masdsachusetts, p. 156, cites the same report. It seems unclear, however, whether he is referring to the St. Louis or another vessel.



surgeon was a drunk, that no funds had been sent to pay him, and that the garrison needed medical supplies and a hospital. On a more positive note, he listed the handful of ordinances he had issued, noted that the settlement at Les Mines (Grand Pre) was growing nicely, and recommended that soldiers in the garrison be permitted to marry and become settlers.<sup>258</sup> He also argued that since fishing was economically his colony's best resource, its development should be promoted through loans to settlers and the provision of armed barques to protect the coasts. But while Meneval had ended his report by remarking that the English "very much wanted Acadia," by this point nothing of substance had been done to improve the defences of Port Royal.<sup>259</sup>

This situation simply reflected French indecision over the proposed building program. While the Minister of Marine sought more detailed data on the colony's borders, Governor Meneval was still considering building a new fort at Pentagouet,<sup>260</sup> and he used Pasquine, in accord with his instructions, to conduct a survey of the proposed frontier, and to draw up plans for future fortifications. Before being assigned to

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<sup>258</sup>

In this manner Meneval was suggesting France, like Virginia a few years later, make use of the time-honoured practice of strengthening far-flung and threatened frontiers by means of military settlers or soldier-borderers. This institution is discussed at greater length in chapter 3 below.

<sup>259</sup>

Meneval's report of 10 September 1688 in Collection de Manuscrits, 1, pp. 411-412, and is summarized in by Rene Baudry in G.W. Brown, et al., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2, p. 182.

<sup>260</sup>

Gargas had reported that although little cleared, this site had good soil, that it was well situated "for trade and the protection of the country;" and that there was "a fair amount of fish in this vicinity;" "Sojourn of Gargas in Acadie," pp. 185-186.

Acadia at the new governor's request, that engineer had mapped the Mediterranean coasts of France and Spain, and his instructions of April 1688 ordered him "to have an examination made of the posts which it is particularly necessary to occupy and fortify for the defence and conservation of the colony in case of war with its neighbour..." or, put differently, the positions necessary for creating a European-style "military" frontier. To this end he surveyed today's Annapolis River and the territory around Port Royal, and proposed several plans for a new fort on the same scale and site as before. Pasquine also visited other French posts on the Baie Francaise (Bay of Fundy), and drew up maps of the mouths of the Saint John, Kennebec and Penobscot rivers, at all of which he recommended additional forts be built. With regard to Port Royal, Pasquine returned to Paris in late December 1688 and presented two plans for forts there, along with calculations of the estimated costs: the first at 9952 livres, and a second at 7761 livres. While it is sometimes suggested that the Marine Ministry rejected both as too expensive, it appears that the second was in fact approved, and an additional 5000 livres allocated towards its construction. This task, however, was assigned to Vincent Saccardy who, rather than Pasquine, now became the king's engineer-general in Canada at the beginning of June 1689.<sup>261</sup>

Accompanied by his two sons and a few soldiers, Saccardy sailed for Acadia on the

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The instructions issued to Pasquine (or Paquine) and his surveys are summarized in Emery LeBlanc's biographical entry in G.W. Brown, *et al.*, Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1, p. 533. With regard to Port Royal, Rene Baudry maintains that the minister rejected Pasquine's project because he "was anxious to save money" in *Ibid.*, 2, p. 182, while Gustave Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, p. 171, incorrectly insists that on the contrary: "Defensive works were built at Port Royal under the direction of an engineer Pasquine."

frigate Embuscade along with Count Frontenac, newly reappointed as governor of New France. They arrived at Chedabuctou in early September to be greeted by seven settlers and twelve soldiers, and Saccardy moved on to land at Port Royal a month later. He reached there with two vessels carrying provisions and other goods, as well as a number of English fishing vessels captured as prizes while illegally fish and trading along the Acadian coasts.<sup>262</sup> Saccardy then worked through October and on into November 1689 to replace the remains of the old fort with a new four-bastion structure based on a drawing different from that of Pasquine's 7761-livre structure. Saccardy's project envisaged an enceinte stockade with corner bastions that was to enclose the mill, church and priest's house, as well as the governor's residence, guard houses and barracks for the garrison, and that was to be large enough to shelter the civilian inhabitants in times of attack. Despite bouts of bad autumn weather, his work force of soldiers, settlers and forty sailors from the two newly arrived vessels managed sixteen days of serious work. But the stockade was still only half completed when Governor Frontenac in Quebec ordered Saccardy and the garrison's other officer, Joseph Robinau de Villebon, back to France. There Minister Seignelay chastised his engineer for having left his palisade uncompleted, and for adopting a plan that was still more elaborate than Pasquine's. Reducing Saccardy's plan by half, in the following spring sent him back to complete the task.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>262</sup>W.A. Calnek, History of the County of Annapolis, p. 37.

<sup>263</sup>

These details are drawn from "Letter of Vincent de Saccardy Relating to Acadie from Rochelle, 12<sup>th</sup> January 1690," in W.I. Morse, Acadiensia Nova, 1, pp.203-222. Also see J.C. Webster, Acadia at the End of the Seventeenth Century, p. 192.

Given that England had declared war on France in that May, such efforts were now too late. Already in that September, while Saccardy was still en route, Meneval had requested that the king send reinforcements for his seventy-man garrison. Somewhat acerbically, he complained that he had “the gout, but neither officers nor cannon;” that pirates and privateers had captured recent shipments of provisions at Chedabuctou (see below); and that his subordinates were nothing but useless intriguers. Since these latter returned the favour in their reports, the small colony was divided by feuds and still desperately awaiting supply ships from home. Meanwhile, English frigates were cruising the Bay of Fundy and Meneval feared a imminent attack. He therefore requested that the Acadia Company recall him, and threatened that if this was refused, he would return to France without permission since he preferred “a hundred times to remain three years in the Bastille rather than one single week here.”<sup>264</sup> In the event it did not matter: by the time the new engineer-general arrived at Port Royal on the Union with Villebon in mid-June 1690, the settlement had fallen (in May) to Sir William Phips and his expedition from Boston, whence Meneval was transported as a captive.<sup>265</sup>

### **England’s First Northeastern “Military Frontier”**

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<sup>264</sup>

W.A. Calnek, History of the County of Annapolis, p. 37.

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Emery LeBlanc in G.W. Brown, et al., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1, p. 586; J.C. Webster, Acadia at the End of the Seventeenth Century, pp. 192; B. Dunn, A History of Port-Royal/Annapolis Royal, pp. 36-38; Emerson W. Baker and John G. Reid, The New England Knight: Sir William Phips, 1651-1695 (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto Press; 1998), pp. 86-95, and R. Baudry in G.W. Brown, et al., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2, pp. 183-184, who notes that when Phips arrived, only three Acadians answered Meneval’s call to arms, and that the latter’s cannon still remained unmounted.

Naomi Griffiths argues that in 1688 “Acadia was in the best condition it had ever been” with an expanding population, solid agricultural subsistence economy, valuable fur trade, and some capability for independent commercial activities.<sup>266</sup> Unfortunately, however, Louis XIV was unwilling to devote in a timely manner the resources necessary for the proper fortification and defence of his struggling colony on the Atlantic coast. John Reid has argued that the unfortunate Meneval “was expected to supervise a radical effort to re-establish Acadia as a colony under the French crown” in a manner “similar in scale and implications to the re-establishment of Canada which had been projected in 1663 and successfully carried through.” The result was an increase in attention and the financial support provided Acadia, but the relaxed pace and parsimony with which Louis XIV’s government carried out its well-intentioned program meant it failed either to defend the region or convince the practical Acadian farmers to break their commercial ties with Massachusetts. Given the expanding responsibilities and difficulties faced by the Ministry of Marine, and the destruction of the informal borderland regime of accommodation by the rivalries with New England “unleashed by the activities of Bergier, Meneval’s task was perhaps an impossible one.”<sup>267</sup> So when the Anglo-Bostonians attacked Port Royal in 1690, the governor-commander only “had a garrison of between sixty and eighty men; eighteen pieces of cannon not mounted (point en batterie), and the fortifications were so trifling that they in no wise protected the

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<sup>266</sup>

N.E.S. Griffiths, From Migrant to Acadian, p. 146.

<sup>267</sup>

J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 177. Also see G. Lanctot, History of Canada. 2, pp. 171-172, and N.E. Griffiths, From Migrant to Acadian, pp. 146-150..

place.”<sup>268</sup>

Given France’s recent efforts to fortify its own extensive eastern frontiers, Louis XIV’s decision to create a similar, if sparser line in the vaster expanses of North America was not necessarily illogical.<sup>269</sup> Acadia also was unfortunate in that the hesitations and indecision of officials in Versailles, Paris and the colonies was paralleled by an outburst of activism on the part of the English governors of New York in expanding and securing their own forward interior borders vis-a-vis New France (Quebec-Montreal). Their aim was to use their increasingly friendly relationship with the Iroquois to dominate the fur trade and displace the French to the northwest, while simultaneously moving the boundary between New England and Acadia in northeast to a line running from the St. Croix to the St. Lawrence. True, when Colonel Edmund Andros arrived back in America in December 1686, this time as royal governor of a newly forming Dominion of New England, his instructions permitted him to lead his forces into battle with the Indians, but banned him from declaring war or engaging any

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<sup>268</sup>

“Narrative of the most remarkable Occurrences in Canada, 1689, 1690,” in E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 9 (1885), p. 462.

<sup>269</sup>

These efforts are discussed at length in Henri Guerlac, “Vauban: The Impact of Science on War,” in Peter Paret, ed., Makers of Modern Strategy (Oxford: Oxford University; 1986), pp. 64-90; Christopher Duffy, The Fortress in the Age of Vauban and Frederick the Great, 1660-1789: Siege Warfare, Volume II (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1985), pp. 63-97. The suitability of a “defensive” style of warfare and fortresses in early colonial North American conditions is discussed in Guy Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, pp. 29-35.

other enemy.<sup>270</sup> We have seen that as governor of New York, like Dongan after him, he had aggressively sought to validate and even expand the territorial pretensions of his patron James, then Duke of York. And now the latter was monarch, the loyal colonel seemingly had no qualms in discarding the vague territorial provisions of the Treaty of Whitehall and again pursuing – by force if necessary – an exaggerated vision with regard to the geographical bounds of the new Dominion,.

In this light it is somewhat surprising to find some historians of New England suggest that these forward policies were justified, at least to a degree, by the hesitant French half-measures described above. George Rawlyk, for example, describes the Neutrality Treaty signed at Whitehall in November 1686 as marking “the beginning of a three-pronged French counteroffensive in the Nova Scotia region” by their colonial officials.<sup>271</sup> Yet he also admits that despite the concerns of New England fishers about the possible impact of French efforts to enforce their monopoly in Acadian waters, during 1687 only a single vessel was seized.<sup>272</sup> Viola Barnes meanwhile explains the return of Andros and creation of the new centralized Dominion by the need to immediately put his new province “into a state of defense” because “the French menace was becoming more threatening.”<sup>273</sup> Possibly so, but the threat to New England was a

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<sup>270</sup>

V. Barnes, The Dominion of New England, p. 219.

<sup>271</sup>

G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 51.

<sup>272</sup>

Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>273</sup>

V. Barnes, The Dominion of New England, p. 219.

singularly feeble one. For despite the leisurely French effort to fortify the colony, Acadia's settlements were unprepared to meet rising storm, let alone launch and attack. Indeed Andros, thanks to the forces his new Dominion concentrated on the disputed New York border when he met representatives from Quebec at Albany, felt strong enough to reiterate Dongan's earlier demands and, as Barnes admits, win an immediate withdrawal of the French troops and garrison at Oniagra in Seneca country. In Europe, meanwhile, the Anglo-French Joint Commission established by the Whitehall Treaty to settle colonial disputes agreed as an interim measure to fix all borders, and ban all hostile actions along them, from January to January, 1688-1689, while additional information was gathered from officials on the spot.<sup>274</sup>

In the interim, whatever the reality of the French threat to New England, on arriving in Boston Andros quickly set to work on organizing a new colonial political entity known Dominion of New England, and in preparing for a possible war with France. Barnes argues that in large part this measure resulted from a suggestion by New York's Governor Dongan that Connecticut, Rhode Island, the Jerseys, and the northern part of Pennsylvania be combined with New York so as to centralise both trade and resources (men and revenues) in order to the English to protect the Iroquois Five Nations, prevent French control of the southern shores of Lake Ontario, and so establish firm control over the beaver fur trade from their base at Albany – goals beyond the strength of his province of New York alone. Instead, the Lords of Trade had resolved to unite the northern colonies within a single province or “dominion,” so as to better enforce regulation of the

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<sup>274</sup>Ibid., pp. 222-224.



colonial trade in accord with the Navigation Acts, as well as to permit more effective military operations against the French in the event of war by unifying control of all available men and resources under a single governor. His task was to make and conduct military policy, and negotiate with both the various Amerindian groups and the French in Quebec and Acadia. As Barnes explains:

The appointment in 1686 of Andros as captain-general of all the military forces within the territory stretching from the St. Croix to the Hudson, and in 1688 to the Delaware, was the most formidable act of preparedness that the English could have performed. From a military point of view, its importance can hardly be overestimated, for it brought centralization of command which made possible a comprehensive military campaign, gave opportunity for the fortification of the weakest spots on the frontier at the common expense, and prepared the way for the adoption of a uniform Indian policy, according to which the Indians of the north and east would be able to deal with one powerful governor instead of with a number of more or less inefficient executives.<sup>275</sup>

The task facing Colonel Andros was indeed daunting and Barnes tells us, on arriving he “found military affairs in an almost hopeless condition.”<sup>276</sup> Despite their recognition of the need for unifying their defensive efforts during King Philip’s War, by the mid-1680s New England remained a string of fractious, largely coastal colonies that remained jealous of their individual rights, which had few military resources, and which maintained only loose connections with the mother country. Rather than standing or permanent military forces, they followed the tradition of “free Englishmen” by relying for their defense on a citizen militia that met to train only a few times each year --

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V. Barnes, The Dominion of New England, p. 216.

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V. Barnes, The Dominion of New England, pp. 216-217.

occasions that often were as much social as military in nature.<sup>277</sup> In times of crisis, the colonial authorities called for volunteers from its ranks and if these proved insufficient, ordered the impressment of other militiamen. Not surprisingly, stocks of arms, ammunition, military equipment and stores of every kind were always inadequate, and what few forts existed were largely intended as harbour defenses, and usually badly in need serious repair and overhaul. Barnes somewhat overstates the case by concluding that the “colonies were quite oblivious to the necessity of mutual military co-operation and indifferent toward appeals from their neighbors for aid...,”<sup>278</sup> but in practice nothing of substance had been done to remedy the situation.

Although Andros himself had brought various stores, including one hundred barrels of gunpowder, and the small arms necessary for equipping two companies of grenadiers, he found only “about 50 Old Match Locks at Boston and some old Arms and Necessarys for Great Guns at Castle Island with about a Barrell of Powder & a few Cartridges,” while the harbour defenses were in a somewhat dilapidated state. The most important existing coastal work was the stone “castle,” armed with thirty guns and a small garrison, sited on an island some three to four miles from Boston in Massachusetts Bay from which it commanded the channel used by shipping entering the port. This was

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On the English militia tradition of this period, see Lois G. Schworer, “No Standing Armies”: The Antiarmy Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University; 1974), and especially pp. 195-200, on its transition to colonial America. On this last issue also see A. Starkey, European and Native Warfare, pp. 39-43, 68-73. After at least 1639, for example, such musters were the occasions for obligatory athletic competitions as well as drill; D.H. Fischer, Albion’s Seed, p. 147.

<sup>278</sup>V. Barnes, The Dominion of New England, p. 213.

supplemented at the town's southern end by a small brick fort with twelve guns, but no garrison. On the north side there was a platform of stones and turf, mounting two small but also unmanned guns, that commanded the river as far as Charlestown. Otherwise, there were a few forts scattered elsewhere, but most needed repair, were poorly manned and badly outfitted. Good soldier that he was, the new governor-commander immediately set out to remedy the situation. Convinced that arms were missing and must be in private hands, on 30 December 1686 he ordered anyone holding cannon, small arms or other war materiel belonging to the colony to immediately render an account in writing, and an order in council soon followed demanding that all arms and equipment, wherever found, be deposited with the dominion's treasurer.<sup>279</sup>

Andros then set out to regulate the militia which had a muster roll of 13,279 men, and another 2000 when New York was included. In March 1688 he further reorganized this force by ordering the service all males above sixteen years, including members of the council, justices of the peace, court officers, clergymen, the president, officers and students of Harvard College, schoolmasters, physicians, and so on. The militia then comprised seven regiments of foot and twelve troops of horse from Massachusetts, three regiments of foot from Plymouth, four of foot and one troop of horse from Connecticut, two regiments of foot from Rhode Island (with Narragansett County), and one regiment of foot apiece from New Hampshire, Maine and Cornwall. Andros also had two companies of English regulars, who were expected to provide his bodyguard in

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V. Barnes, The Dominion of New England, pp. 216-217. The quotes are from Andros' reports to London.

peacetime and serve as a backbone for the militia during a war, and two additional regular companies after New York was added to his Dominion. Although initially financed directly by London, the authorities there expected a reorganization of colonial finances would in time make this unnecessary.<sup>280</sup>

This reorganization of the colony's military manpower was paralleled by a rebuilding and extension of its physical defenses. As a military professional of the day, Andros first turned to strengthening his political and military base of Boston. Judging the fort on Castle Island to be too small for his garrison, and too distant from the town to provide an effective defence, he fortified Fort Hill. From this position his forces commanded both the town itself as well all land and sea approaches to it, and had at their disposal a good near-shore channel on which the governor built a dry-dock and warehouses for supplies unloaded there. This accomplished, he turned his attention to the strengthening his dominion's frontiers. The fort at Pemaquid aside, these had remained confined to towns with the type of garrison houses used during King Philip's War. With Albany garrisoned and the French withdrawing from Iroquois country, New York appeared to be secured for the moment. Andros therefore again focused most of his efforts on the unstable northeast. As a professional soldier, Andros now set out to create his own fortified military frontier so as to uphold his territorial claims, counter any French efforts to counter them, and repulse any possible attacks from the increasingly hostile Abenaki.

As noted above, Andros ignored any implications of the Treaty of Neutrality in this

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V. Barnes, The Dominion of New England, pp. 218-219.

border zone and from the first was determined to obtain Saint-Castin's submission to England as ordered in 1686 by the New York Judge John Palmer. This latter also ordered the seizure of all wine found in Abenaki lands, which led to the above-mentioned seizure of the Johanna and its cargo by Captain Thomas Sharpe, Governor Dongan's commander at Pemaquid. Although the incident was settled diplomatically between Paris and London, the measure had been aimed at Saint-Castin, and the New York authorities were insistent that he now apply to the British crown for a grant for his lands. To enforce this demand, Andros followed Dongan's example and in June 1687 dispatched "eighty men to take possession of Pentagouet and lay claim to the entire coast up to St. Croix, 40 leagues away," and insisted that Saint-Castin cease complying with orders from the French.<sup>281</sup> This second raid, along with the demands of Andros, and departure of his rival Perrot from the post of governor of Acadia, may have at last convinced Saint-Castin that it was time to choose sides and declare for France. Instead of accepting the English terms, he now applied for protection through Meneval to Louis XIV at Versailles, and requested thirty soldiers as well as funds so as to support his Abenaki allies and hold his fort on the Penobscot River. In 1688 Meneval reported that Saint-Castin had stopped trading with the English, given up his debauched life among the natives, and married Mathilde, daughter of the influential Penobscot sachem Madockawando, and supported this proposal.<sup>282</sup>

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Quoted in G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 55.

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Kenneth M. Morrison, The Embattled Northeast: The Elusive Ideal of Alliance in Abenaki-Euroamerican Relations (Berkeley, CA: University of California; 1984), p. 121.

Despite these provocative developments, the year 1688 opened with little sign the disastrous war to come. Although the French threat facing New York had yet to be removed and the English forces remained in a state of readiness, there was no pretext for an immediate attack. The threat was even less immediate in the Acadia border zone and Andros used this apparent “breathing spell to train his Dominion’s militia and improve the equipment, knowing that troops would be needed on other frontiers if an outbreak occurred in New York.” Even so, he supposedly also expected major hostilities to break out along the “exposed Maine frontier,” and therefore “took particular pains to anticipate them by placing that region in a state of defense.” As a first step he ordered Captain George with the frigate Rose to make a reconnaissance cruise along the eastern coast as far as the Penobscot River, and to obtain all possible intelligence possible regarding Saint-Castin. In addition, the good captain had instructions to order anyone residing in that territory without specific permission either to depart immediately, or to apply at Pemaquid for the right to remain..<sup>283</sup>

A month later Andros followed these instructions with a formal order “forbidding persons without a license to settle or trade in the eastern part of the territory west of the St. Croix River.” He now determined to personally “assert the rights of his master” within this disputed territory, and to confront de Saint-Castin, whom he suspected of selling arms and supplies to the Indians, and of trying to draw them into a French

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As indicated below, G.A. Rawlyk and others believe he made this decision only became final after the third raid a year later.

<sup>283</sup>

V.F. Barnes, The Dominion of New England, pp. 222-223.

alliance. For this purpose he himself accompanied Captain George and the Rose which stopped at various settlements along the Maine coast before reaching the French trader's residence at Pentagouet. There Andros found its proprietor absent and, having sent several men on to the St. Croix, waited several days before breaking into and plundering Saint-Castin's house. In the end, he carried off to Pemaquid all arms, munitions, iron kettles, trade cloth, and furniture found within, respecting only the altar and serving vessels of the Catholic chapel. At the same time, one participant reported, notice was "irregularly given to the Indian Sachem, neighbour to Casteen, that he should have all his goods restored if he would demand them at Pemmequid and come under obedience to the King," and that no one except Indians, Saint-Castin included, was allowed to remain there without the governor's permission.<sup>284</sup> Andros then returned to Boston, well satisfied with the results of his expedition. In June he reported to London that he had left "all well in those parts," while in July he claimed to have found the Indian sachems of the northeast to be "very orderly." In addition, and despite the recent reasserting of the Treaty of Breda, the governor confidently asserted that his own investigations confirmed that the New England boundary "hath always been and Deemed and knowne to be the

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Edward Randolph quoted in G.W. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 55. Samuel Adams Drake, The Border Wars of New England, commonly called King William's and Queen Anne's Wars (Boston, 1897. Reprint: Williamstown, MA: Corner House Publishers; 1973), pp. 10-11; J.G.Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 180; V.F. Barnes, The Dominion of New England, p. 223; P.F.X. de Charlevoix, History and General Description of New France, 3, p. 211. Edward Randolph, the participant quoted, reports Saint-Castin left after being advised of Andros' arrival by Captain George.

River St Croix and a right Lyne from the head of that River to the River Canada."<sup>285</sup>

Others, both at the time and since, have given less positive assessments. Edward Randolph, the participant in Andros' expedition quoted above, noted the resentment these actions roused among the local Abenaki.<sup>286</sup> Again, the publicist Cotton Mather pointed to the influence among those natives of "Monsieur St. Casteen," and asked if they did "not from this very Moment [that is, Andros' raid of 1688] begin to be obstreperous" and cause "all the Sober English in the Country" to "Foretel a War?"<sup>287</sup> "The baseness of the act," echoed S.A. Drake in the 1890s, "so like that of some roving buccaneer, aroused the indignation of St. Castin's tribesman, the Penobscots, over whom he had unlimited control, and they were now ready to dig up the hatchet whenever he should give the signal."<sup>288</sup> More recent judgements, like John Reid's that "Saint-Castin's emnity also implied the emnity of his Indian kin"<sup>289</sup> are usually expressed more moderately. Indeed, George Rawlyk argues the last straw for Saint-Castin was the seizure of his ship by New Englanders at Canso later that summer, for which he also blamed "his archenemy Andros," and that thereafter he "vowed to wreck vengeance on

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<sup>285</sup>

J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 181.

<sup>286</sup>

Quoted in Ibid.

<sup>287</sup>

Quoted in G.A. Rawlyk, New England's Massachusetts, pp. 55, 56-57.

<sup>288</sup>

S.A. Drake, Border Wars of New England, p. 11.

<sup>289</sup>

J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 181.



neighbouring Massachusetts in spite of his close commercial ties with the colony.<sup>290</sup> But as noted earlier, he already had opened negotiations to resume active French citizenship a year earlier and some maintain that when Andros arrived on his doorstep, Saint-Castin was away leading an Abenaki force in a joint expedition against the Iroquois organized by the then governor of Quebec.<sup>291</sup> So if a small band of Indians did reportedly revenge Saint-Castin by killing a number of head of cattle at North Dartmouth, while others raided Springfield and Northfield in August, the Abenaki were still far from united in any determination to go to war. Similarly, and despite these events, Governor Andros still hoped to negotiate successfully with the Frenchman's father-in-law, the Abenaki chief Madokawando, who travelled to Boston to continue talks with the governor who had returned there in March 1689. And in the event, these negotiations only collapsed when the sachem departed in the wake of Andros' overthrow.<sup>292</sup>

Although Andros' expansionist claims and feud with Saint-Castin seemed to threaten the regional peace, the struggle long remained muted and largely contained by the Treaty of Whitehall. During this period, despite Andros' own justifications, the colonists' own

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<sup>290</sup>

G.A. Rawlyk, New England's Massachusetts, p. 56.

<sup>291</sup>

G.C. Salagnac in G.W. Brown, et al., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2, p. 7

<sup>292</sup>

K.M. Morrison, The Embattled Northeast, p. 117; E.W. Baker and J.G. Reid, The New England Knight, p. 75; and George H. Guttridge, The Colonial Policy of William III in America and the West Indies (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1922. London: Frank Cass Reprint; 1966), p. 20.

growing suspicions of the Catholic French,<sup>293</sup> and the comments of some later historians, it would seem that at the time, the only serious danger faced by New England's colonists in the Northeast came from the native inhabitants, and it is hard to avoid concluding that a "renewal of hostilities with the Abenakis, after ten years of peace, was distinctly the result of English aggressions."<sup>294</sup> True, tensions continued to mount in New England and in the summer of 1688 and Andros' subordinate Nicholson noted "a reporte among the ffishermen that Casteen was come to Penopscott with a ffrigatt, to build a fort there," and that the French "stand mightily upon Penopscott's being in their precincts."<sup>295</sup> In fact, however, France responded to Andros' initiatives merely by launching additional formal diplomatic protests<sup>296</sup> while Saint-Castin and his father-in-law only began leading the raids on New England's border settlements, with French backing, after the outbreak of hostilities between the Abenaki and the English settlers.<sup>297</sup> John Reid argues convincingly that the outbreak of the new war with the Abenaki "was not directly connected with the tension between English and French, though the two conflicts soon

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293

G. Plank, "Culture of Conquest," pp. 33-34, makes note the growth among Protestants in England and New England of political and religious antagonism towards the Roman Catholic French during the 1680s.

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S.A. Drake, The Border Wars of New England, p. 9.

295

Quoted in J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 181.

296

On France's and New France's responses see G. Lanctot, History of Canada. 2, pp. 171-172, and K.M. Morrison, The Embattled Northeast, pp. 121-122.

297

G.C. Salagnac in G.W. Brown, et al., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1, p. 7.

coalesced.” He points out that although persistent rumours since 1684 of increasing native hostility had brought an attempt at appeasement, relations still remained badly strained by disputes over fishing rights, land holdings, the damage caused Abenaki crops by colonists’ cattle, and the refusal of the English to pay the annual rent or tribute promised by the peace of 1678. The final straw for the Abenaki came in the autumn of 1688 when one Benjamin Blackman seized sixteen (some say 20 or 21) natives “on Suspition” at Saco as a reprisal for the cattle kill at North Dartmouth. To this the Kennebec Abenaki responded by descending on New Dartmouth (later Newcastle) where they destroyed property and took two families as their own hostages, explaining that this was in answer to the Saco captures and the raid on Saint-Castin’s post and mission. After negotiations, an exchange was arranged at Falmouth, Maine, but misunderstandings led instead to further fighting. Confronted by these events on his return from Albany in October 1688, Andros was furious by the ham-fisted and deceptive behaviour of the colonists, but convinced that peace might still be preserved. But while personally undertaking negotiations with the Natives, he backed this with a show of force. For this purpose he resolved “to send three or four vessells and forces suitable to secure and settle the Easterne parts....”<sup>298</sup>

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298

J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 181; G. Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, p. 79; G.F. Plank, “Culture of Conflict,” pp. 33-34; and in greater detail, Abenaki-English relations are examined by K.M. Morrison, The Embattled Northeast, pp. 109-117. Andros’ confidence in his efforts at negotiation, and probably the willingness of the Abenaki to take part, reflected his earlier success as governor of New York in negotiating early treaties in the famous Covenant Chain with the Iroquois during the 1670s, and in recent meetings in Albany. Nonetheless, his arrogant criticism of the actions of the New England settlers in Maine, and the lack of transparency in

To this end the governor-colonel repaired and strengthened the works at Pemaquid while ordering the construction of a new fort at New Dartmouth, a redoubt on the Damoriscotta River, four forts along the Kennebec River at Sagadahoc, Newtown, Fort Anne and Penobscot, others at Falmouth on Casco Bay, on the Saco River, at Kennebunk and at Wells. This work was carried out during his march of November 1688-February 1689 with some 700 men through the swampy and forested wilderness along the northeastern borders to end at Pemaquid. This occurred under the threat of the outbreak of full-scale hostilities with the Abenaki, and aimed at overawing them. During this campaign he reported seizing various goods and munitions from the Indians so as to reduce them to using bows and arrows, and he claimed to have uncovered an extensive trade in arms and ammunition between them and various Boston merchants, Saint-Castin's onetime partner John Nelson included. Meanwhile, each post or fort received a mixed garrison of English regulars and colonial militiamen, while other regulars were placed on the upper Merrimac and along the Connecticut with orders to cooperate with the local militias. He also purchased a ketch and detailed men to act as messengers on land in an effort to improve communications between these posts.<sup>299</sup>

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negotiations, fed suspicions that he intended to sell out New England to the Indians, and possibly to the French as well. His career in this respect is discussed in F. Jennings, The Ambiguous Iroquois Empire, pp. 191-194; F. Jennings, ed., The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy; pp. 160-163; and D.K. Richter, Facing East from Indian Country, pp. 141-157.

<sup>299</sup>

V.F. Barnes, The Dominion of New England, pp. 217-218; and G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 58, on the Indian ties with the merchants. Also see S.A. Drake, Border Wars of New England, p. 12. With regard to forts and garrisons, see Philip S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, 1689-1713 (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1974), pp. 78-79, and G. Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, p. 179-180,

When listed in this manner, Andros accomplishment during his brief tenure appears not unimpressive, especially in comparison to the feeble measures implemented by the allegedly aggressive French to the north in Acadia. Furthermore, the problems faced in creating any true European-style military frontier in North American conditions, or even one of local significance in the limited Acadian region, were probably insurmountable. For the distances, rough terrain and wooded nature of the countryside involved in the Northeastern-Acadia border zone made it materially and physically impossible to reproduce the dense defensive networks found on the more confined European border zones. These problems would multiply exponentially in the case of a more general conflict since, by 1689, the frontier of the Dominion of New England "practically extended from the Hudson to the Penobscot, or from Albany to Pemaquid." Meanwhile, "the rivers flowing southward to the sea, through the English settlements, were always so many avenues of danger to be watched," and "this whole extent of country was open to an enemy who needed nothing but the sun, moon, or stars to guide him." It clearly was impossible to man this long frontier. "To block up the mouths of the rivers with forts, isolated from all support," he adds "was equally idle, as was proved by the utter failure of every such attempt." In this lay the essential weakness of the English: despite their larger populations, they lived in scattered nucleated villages and even individual farmsteads, and so "were compelled to receive the enemy at their own doors, and that disadvantage they labored under from first to last."<sup>300</sup>

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notes he left 60 men in Casco and 120 at Pemaquid.

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S.A. Drake, Border Wars of New England, p. 2.

Admitting that the realities behind this judgement made a densely defended European-style military frontier impossible does not mean that strategically placed frontier posts could not help mitigate the results of this situation. Apart from providing refuges for the inhabitants of nearby settlements, and attracting enemy attacks from other targets, they offered other military advantages. For this reason the military historian Guy Chet rightly gives Andros high marks for employing his troops for

the construction, fortification and garrisoning of frontier strongholds. He predicted that 'Good forts, being thus Garrison'd with Stout Hearts, in several Convenient places' would enable English forces to set out on short incursions into Indian territory, thus keeping the Indians away from their crops and fisheries. Furthermore, by garrisoning these fortresses year-round, English forces would be able to harass the Indian tribes during the winter months, when they were most vulnerable to the ravages of war and surprise attacks

But unfortunately, Chet concludes, "Andro's foresight and logistical prudence were lost on his immediate successors"<sup>301</sup> and with his fall, his system of frontier defenses collapsed.

As this suggests, an equally important factor in Andros' failure to create a lasting and effective chain of forward defensive outposts was his ability to alienate even those he was attempting to defend. As Samuel Drake observes, the Abenaki and subsequent French War came to New England when "no time could have been worse chosen for an outbreak." Many in Massachusetts had been angered by their charter's displacement with the centralized royal government of the Dominion, as well as by the concurrent increases in the tax burden, official attempts to confine their trade within the Navigation Acts,

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G. Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, p. 97.

threats to their land grants, and Andros' authoritarian, in their eyes despotic, style of government. Overall, the Bay Colony's citizens were "disconcerted, angry, and stubborn" -- hardly the best frame of mind with which to face a great public danger.<sup>302</sup> Most therefore had little sympathy even with those initiatives of the governor intended for their own security: "They have built something up Kennebec River which is called Fort Ann, where Captain Savage is with his Company," wrote one prominent colonist dismissively of Andros' campaign of the winter 1688-1689.<sup>303</sup> Indeed, the governor was still on the northeast border in early 1689 when news arrived that William III had ousted James II from the British throne, an event recognized in Europe and America as making an Anglo-French conflict inevitable. But if this likelihood, as well as the growing frequency of clashes with the Abenaki, made Andros' program of frontier posts more vital than ever, many New Englanders now suspected him of helping to arm their Indian attackers, or even of betraying them -- as part of some great Franco-Catholic conspiracy with James II -- to the Abenaki and their presumed French-Papist allies.<sup>304</sup> The end result

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S.A. Drake, Border Wars of New England, p.10. Also see A. Taylor, American Colonies, pp. 276-277.

303

Wait Winthrop to his brother, quoted in S.A. Drake, Border Wars of New England, p. 12.

304

Some historians, such as G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 58, admit that the Indians did not want a war, but insist that the French were "gently" pushing the unwilling Abenaki towards war with New England. More recent studies, however, suggest that not only did no alliance exist, but that both Canada and Versailles only seriously considered the military advantage offered by the Abenaki in 1690 when "French leaders finally realized the ominous character of Acadian developments..." K.M. Morrison, The Embattled Northeast, pp.121-125, quote p. 123. This accords with the Indian leaders apparent openness to further negotiations and John Reid, Acadia,

was that many leading colonists began planning a coup, to be carried out in the name of William III, to remove their hated governor.<sup>305</sup>

Events now moved rapidly. Despite Andros' attempts to negotiate with the Abenaki, and a general desire among the latter to avoid a war, tensions between them and the New Englanders were already escalating, and incidents accumulating, even before the governor's departure from Maine to return to Boston in mid-March. In mid-February, for example, one colonist reported that while two sleds at Shipscott were returning home, "the latter of them was assaulted. The Indians fired, killed one man; and wounded another, who escaped. The dead they scalped, and went home triumphing...."<sup>306</sup> Even so, with Andros back in Boston, his enemies acted on 18 April 1689. Having arrested the governor and some fifty of his associates, they established their own "Council of Safety" on the 20<sup>th</sup> and having dismantled the Dominion, on 24 May the last governor, deputy

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Maine and New Scotland, p. 181, concludes: "Even at this stage, the conflict thus ignited need not have involved the whole northeastern maritime region. Although it must have been clear to Saint-Castin that French and Abenaki might profitably unite against the English, no such alliance existed. The French-English dispute was in fact circumscribed and effectively quarantined by the general provisions of the treaty of Whitehall."

305

P.S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, pp. 10-11, who notes that with hindsight these "constructions of New Englanders may easily be ridiculed.." But he adds that at the time, there was "ample reason to mistrust the political judgement and intent of the Stuart king [James II] and to fear that the loyalty of administrators in New England would compound his errors," although he agrees that "the immediate actions of Andros did not justify suspicion that he designed precipitate action harmful to Massachusetts." And indeed, a good soldier, the colonel later served William III loyally elsewhere. Also see G. Plank, "Culture of Conflict," pp. 33-34; V.F. Barnes, The Dominion of New England, pp. 231-242.

306

Letter to Thomas Hinckey from John Cotton, Plymouth, 15 February 1688/1689, "The Hinckley Papers," 5, p. 189.



governor and magistrates to be elected under the old Charter in 1686, were restored to office.<sup>307</sup> But with “our Governor in Prison and the Land in Confusion,” as one contemporary observed, Madockawando’s departure doomed all hopes of a negotiated settlement with the Abenaki.<sup>308</sup> A few weeks later full-scale hostilities broke out in the Northeast when Madockawando, apparently joining with his new son-in-law Saint-Castin, raided the settlements in Maine. At the same time, the successful Glorious Revolution in England brought that nation’s declaration of war on France on 7 May 1688, and so ended attempts at the diplomatic resolution of contested issues, removed even the fragile barrier on intercolonial strife imposed by the Treaty of Whitehall, and in the Northeast “merged what at first was merely a local conflict, into the larger proportions of a national conflict ... and, willing or unwilling, the colonies found

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E.W. Baker and J.G. Reid, The New England Knight, pp.74-75; G.W. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, pp. 58-59. A contemporary account is provided by the anonymous pamphlet “On the Rebellion Against Governor Andros,” in M. Adler, ed., The Annals of America, 1, pp. 277-281.

<sup>308</sup>

K.M. Morrison, The Embattled Northeast, p. 117; E.W. Baker and J.G. Reid, The New England Knight, p. 74. An early historian of Massachusetts, Thomas Hutchinson, doubts the sachem’s good faith in these negotiations, writing: “The war with the Indians, which began before the revolution of the government, continued all the year after. Madockawando, sachem of the Penobscots, who came into Pemaquid, was sent to Boston just about the time the governor [Andros] was confined. The authority treated him kindly, and sent him home, and at the same time wrote to St. Castin, and desired him to use his influence over the Indians, and offered him safe conduct, if he inclined to come to come to Boston. Madockawando had promised his interest for redemption of the captives which had been taken, and for putting an end to the war; but both he and Castine deceived the government. Madockawando proved a most virulent enemy;” T.F. Hutchinson, The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay, p. 335.

themselves drawn into it."<sup>309</sup>

It was in this context that despite its obvious value, Andros newly created system of frontier defense was permitted to collapse or, rather, to a large extent was dismantled by the new regime. Despite a year of simmering hostility and actual raids, G.H. Guttridge charges that the leaders of the Massachusetts Council of Safety “displayed a reckless disregard for the country's safety” in their efforts to purge the colony’s administration and forces of Papists and other supposed partisans of the deposed James II. Their first military measures after abolishing the Dominion structure was to recall all regular officers suspected of Catholicism to Boston, and otherwise reduce the garrisons left by Andros along the line of the northeast Frontier. “The usual instructions issued appear to have ordered the preservation of as many men as were necessary, and the dismissal of the rest -- an order which was interpreted with little eye to the frontier danger....”<sup>310</sup> In the event, these garrisons already had been weakened when soldiers began deserting on receiving news of the successful coup in Boston and in late May Edward Randolph, then still imprisoned in Boston by the victorious anti-Andros leadership, warned that the various mutinies among the garrisons had badly weakened the English powers of resistance.<sup>311</sup> This process that increased in tempo when their commanders were recalled.

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309

S.A. Drake, Border Wars of New England, p. 10; J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, pp. 179-181. As Reid observes, the failure to precisely define the New England-Acadia border had remained a “crucial flaw” in that treaty, and had promoted constant friction in the zone between the Kennebec and the St. Croix Rivers.

310

G.H. Guttridge, The Colonial Policy of William III, p. 20;

311

Cited in J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 181.

Worse still, however, the military frontier so recently erected by Andros to defend the New England was not only weakened, but it contracted physically due to deliberate decisions of the leaders of revolutionary New England. Suspicious of the value of these forts from the beginning, they now cited the shortages of funds, munitions and other military resources as justifications for the outright abandonment of some frontier posts. In their view, they later explained to London, the mobilized militia forces, now divided among the various provincial commands, were more usefully deployed in fortified settlements with their garrison houses than in the exposed border posts. Consequently, Massachusetts disowned the post at Sagadahoc on the grounds that it had been built and abandoned by fishermen, and found similar grounds for likewise washing its hands of, and withdrawing garrisons from, Fort Anne and Pojebscot on the Kennebec, and the redoubt on the Damariscotta.<sup>312</sup>

As a result, by early summer 1689 Andros' military frontier was gone and Fort Loyall (at Falmouth) and Pemaquid were left as the only English strongpoints in far distant Maine. Furthermore, both were badly and, as subsequent events would show, fatally weakened. At Pemaquid, for instance, the commander's removal was ordered in April, and this resulted in the desertion of all but thirty of the 150-man garrison. Although the former commander's deputy, Lieutenant Weems, declared himself a loyal Protestant and was retained at the request of the civilian inhabitants, he now served only

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<sup>312</sup>

P.S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, pp. 79-80; G. Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, p. 80.

as an advisor, without full powers of command, “the soldiers doing as they pleased.”<sup>313</sup> In these conditions the English settlers in Maine felt they had abandoned to the Abenaki. At the same time, Andros’ overthrow also had left the coast and shipping open to future French attacks thanks to the virtual decommissioning of the frigate Rose, a danger underlined by the French seizure of six Salem ketches off Cape Sable.<sup>314</sup> But if it was along the frontier in Maine that the coming storm loomed most darkly, its full fury of the Abenaki finally broke on 27 June over the town of Dover, New Hampshire, on the northeast edge of wilderness.

This was a true “frontier town” of the Turner model, with five garrison houses, all “surrounded by walls built of timber, with gates securely bolted and barred at night, at which time those families whose homes were not thus protected came into the nearest garrison to sleep,” and then returned home in the morning. But as Samuel Drake later

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G.H. Guttridge, The Colonial Policy of William III, pp. 20, 47. On Weems’ position, see his “Letter to Simon Bradsreer, President of the Council of Safety and the other Gentlemen of the Massachusetts Council in Boston, from James Weems on his Post of Pemaquid, Pemaquid, 11 May 1689,” in Baxter Manuscripts published as the Collections of the Maine Historical Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, vol. 4-24 (Portland, ME: 1889-1916), 9, pp. 1-2.

314

G.H. Guttridge, The Colonial Policy of William III, p. 21; P.S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, p. 12. In dealing with these seizures, G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, pp. 59-61, points out that the interests of the fishing industry were perhaps more important than the “shrill howls of the frontier inhabitants” in pushing the leadership in Boston towards a break with France, and that Acadia’s Governor Meneval was probably unhappy over both French support for the Abenaki campaign in Maine, and the actions of the two frigates against Salem fishing vessels. He correctly understood, Rawlyk argues, that these policies would destroy all possibility that the Treaty of Whitehall could shield his still virtually defenceless colony from reprisals organized in Boston.

observed: ““Though they did not know it, the people of Dover were actually walking between life and death....” In any case, most accounts agree that Amerindians from Penicook on the Merrimack River region gained entry to Major Wadron’s garrison house by treachery, let in their fellows, killed Waldron and twenty-two others, and plundered and burned all the houses outside of those garrison houses they had failed to storm. When news of this assault reached Boston, a relief expedition was dispatched, only to find the Abenaki had departed with twenty-nine captives.<sup>315</sup> That this event not unnaturally caused anxiety, if not panic, all along the western and northeastern borders of Massachusetts is indicated by an appeal from Ipswich for reinforcements dated 1 July. Apart from the death at native hands of one Captain Broughton on Saturday last, the writer reports that they “are continually receiving information of the increase of ye enemys Numbers;” that he found “great heaviness in our peoples motion;” that they had “not one man Come from Lynn & are informed from Cap-t Marshall that none will come;” and that “From Salem we have but 6 men.” For these reasons, he told the Council, “I am necessitated to Crave further Assiast-c & Direction from yo-r hon- rs....”<sup>316</sup> As for Maine, a letter on the situation there dated 10 July, also possibly from the

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S.A. Drake, Border Wars of New England, pp. 15-22.. He maintains that the Indians involved were seeking revenge for the treacherous capture and sale as slaves of their fellows during King Philip’s War. Also see T.F. Hutchinson, The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay, 1, pp. 335-336, and P.S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, pp. 84-85.

316

“Letter from Samuel Appleton, Ipswich, to the Massachusetts Council, 1 July 1689,” in the Baxter Manuscripts, 9, p. 2. For similar complaints and appeals for aid from Wells (30 June 1689) and Dunstable (23 July 1689) see F.J.Turner, “The First Official Frontier of the Massachusetts Bay,” pp. 47-48.

imprisoned Randolph, told London that the region's colonists "draw off apace and I am jealous they will leave all to the Eastward of Piscataqua River to the Indians and French."<sup>317</sup>

The increasingly desperate leaders of Massachusetts, having abandoned Andros defensive line, now began searching for a more offensive alternative to carry the war to their Amerindian opponents. This is clear from an appeal made by Governor Simon Broadstreet on Behalf of the General Convention of Massachusetts to Governor Thomas Hinckley and the Council of New Plymouth in mid-July. "The present distressed state and condition of the eastern parts, by the barbarous murders and outrages committed by the heathen upon the inhabitants there and destruction of their estates," Broadstreet wrote,

is accompanied with many difficult circumstances under the present conjuncture of affairs amongst us, and has been and is very chargeable and expensive unto us, besides the dangers we lie exposed unto, nearer home, in our frontier towns, which we are necessitated to garrison; the intelligence of which you cannot but have received. What further progress God may allow that enemy to make in our towns, and to reach as far as unto you, is not without our just fears, unless mercifully prevented in the use of all proper means. We doubt not that you will look at yourselves concerned for our welfare and safety, and be ready to yield all necessary assistance when desired, according to the rules of our ancient union and confederation. It's thought the most easy and likely way to suppress this enemy [is] by employing some parties of our friend[ly] Indians, under the conduct and management of some English, to be as a flying army to scout upon the heads of the out towns and plantations, and to march to the headquarters of the enemy, as they may have advice and encouragement, to cut up their corn, and take their women and children if they miss the opportunity of destroying the fighting men. If you could, therefore, engage a competent number of the friendly Indians to come down, under the conduct and

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Quoted in J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 182.

management of a meet number of Indians, with such assistance as should be given them here, they should not want a due reward for the service they should do in that kind. (We have written to Captain Church thereabouts). We pray that you will seriously advise upon this matter, and let us have a speedy return from you; and (if you think fit) that some gentlemen from you, with others from our neighboring Colony of Connecticut (to whom we have written to that effect ), may be appointed suddenly to meet with some of ours here at Boston, to consult and advise what may be most necessary and conducing to the good and safety of the whole, and to the destruction of the common enemy. We are waiting with expectation of directions from England for our full settlement, which we hope will suddenly arrive; begging your prayers for God's gracious presence and guidance in all our arduous affairs, unto whom we commit you....<sup>318</sup>

Before any such measures could be implemented, there was worse to come. "Intelligence arrived, soon after [the Dover attack]," wrote an early historian of Massachusetts, "of mischief done in several parts of the county of York, or province of Main, and, on the 22d of August, the fort at Pemaquid .... was besieged by Indians."<sup>319</sup>

Accounts of the fall of this major though isolated English position vary in their details from author to author: for example, figures for the garrison's numbers range from four to fourteen to sixteen men, while those for their Canibas-Abenaki opponents usually are placed at some 300. Again, some insist that the besiegers were led by Saint-Castin and his father-in-law, yet others suggest that only Madockawando was directly involved, but that he acted "in concert" with his French kinsman, and the eventual losses and fate of the garrison, which surrendered after from one to four days, has been disputed.

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"Appeal of Governor Simon Broadstreet on Behalf of the General Convention of Massachusetts to Governor Thomas Hinckley and the Council of New Plymouth for Aid Against the Indians, Boston, 17 July 1689," in "The Hinckley Papers," 5, pp. 203-204.

<sup>319</sup>

T.F. Hutchinson, The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay, 1, pp. 336-337.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the French Jesuit de Charlevoix stresses the extent to which the Abenaki converts to Catholicism saw this as a religious crusade against the heretic Protestant English.<sup>320</sup> Whatever the truth in each case, the fact remains that Weems only put up a token resistance, that at least some prisoners escaped alive, and that New Englanders were undoubtedly chilled by the warning boast of one of the victorious sachems. "Sir Edmund Andros," he told Weems' departing garrison, "was a great rogue and had nearly starved them [by his campaign of] last winter, but he was now a prisoner, and they no care for New England people; they (will) have all their country by and by."<sup>321</sup>

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320

In Ibid., for example, Hutchinson claims by this time Weems' garrison had been reduced to four, that it fell because the Abenaki could fire into the fort from a nearby, overlooking rock, and that although Weems surrounded on terms after one day, these "were kept with Indian (fidelity), some of the men being butchered, and the others carried captive...." However, P.S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, p. 85, insists that "the garrison departed without interference," and that Saint-Castin helped lead the attack, as does G. Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, pp. 80-81. Meanwhile, G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 59, speaks of 200 Indians "well equipped with French supplies while G.H. Guttridge, Colonial Policy of William III, p. 47, cites reports of 300 Indians "all well-armed with 'new French fuzees, waistbelts and cutlasses, gray and black hats on their heads, and some with coloured wigs.'" As for Saint-Castin, G.C. Salagnac in G.W. Brown, et al., eds., Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 2, p. 6, among others, makes no mention of his participation and suggests he only became directly involved in 1690, while E.W. Baker and J.G. Reid, The New England Knight, p. 75 maintain he acted "in concert" before Pemaquid with Madokawando. Otherwise, French documents also mention the latter's presence, as well as the killing of prisoners, although this is denied, and the influence of Catholicism stressed in P.F.X. de Charlevoix, History and General Description of New France, 4, pp. 39-42, which includes a discussion of comparative French and English accounts in the editor John Shea's note (p. 42). Edward Randolph's "A short account of the loss of Pemaquid Fort, New England, August 3, 1689," was forwarded in a "Letter from Mr. Randolph, Boston, 8 October 1689," in Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and West Indies, 1689-1692, no. 316.

321

Quoted in K.M. Morrison, The Embattled Northeast, pp. 117; E.W. Baker and J.G. Reid, The New England Knight, p. 75.



The victors, taking their captives, then marched against the small (12 households) town of New Harbour, but found that the settlers had fled on hearing of the attack on Pemaquid.<sup>322</sup>

For the English settlers in the Northeastern or Acadian borderlands, matters went from bad to worse. Although Thomas Hutchinson, the eighteenth-century historian of Massachusetts, insisted that the fort was too far distant to be part of any well-coordinated system of defence,<sup>323</sup> from a military-political point of view the fall of Pemaquid was still a “significant setback for the English.” With its loss, the Indians, subsequently supported by their French allies, were free to concentrate their attacks on the most vulnerable settlements in Maine east of Casco Bay. Pursuing the recovery of their territory, the Abenaki now subjected the frontier farms in the Pscataqua region to a continuing series of destructive raids, which quickly pushed the English frontier in Maine southward.<sup>324</sup> According to Charlevoix, this “more vigorous” campaign was “attended with still greater loss to the English. The latter had in the neighborhood of the Kennebec fourteen small forts, quite well defended” and joining forces, the “Indians of Pentagoet and St. John's River ... surprised them all, killing as many as two hundred persons, and

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<sup>322</sup>

G. Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, p. 81.

<sup>323</sup>

T.F. Hutchinson, The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts Bay, 2, p. 51.

<sup>324</sup>

Ibid.; P.S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, p. 85; G.H. Guttridge, Colonial Policy of William III, p. 47.

carrying off a very large booty.”<sup>325</sup> Although most New Englanders and their leaders blamed the French for their problems, and began urging action against Acadia and Quebec,<sup>326</sup> they could not but respond to these assaults. The Massachusetts Council, backed by Connecticut and Plymouth, formed two expeditions of militiamen, rangers and friendly Amerindians under veteran Indian fighters Major Swaine and Benjamin Church to the northeast to reinforce the garrisons there.<sup>327</sup>

Swaine’s force of some 600 men left first, in early September and, travelling by sea up the coast to relieve isolated Casco (Falmouth). This tiny town now was “of critical importance to English presence and government in eastern Maine” since the settlements farther had been abandoned after the fall of Pemaquid. Yet it remained defended only by

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<sup>325</sup>P.F.X. de Charlevoix, History and General Description of New France, 4, p. 42.

<sup>326</sup>

G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, p. 59. He notes that this was a “period of acute disorientation and anxiety,” during which “Indian numbers were wildly exaggerated, as was the actual Indian threat to the colony.” He adds that although Governor Bradstreet of Massachusetts reported that “they were ‘doubtless incited by the French’ and ‘by them supplied with ammunition,’ throughout 1689-1690 Yankee traders continued ... to supply the French and Indians, thus facilitating their aggressive designs.” Other reports seemed to confirm such views. For example, on 17 September 1689, Governor Thomas Hinkley wrote his wife: “Five French Indians taken by the Indians of Albany, that say the French Governor of Canada sent them to destroy all Christians they can meet with; and sent also other small parties, with same commission, to those parts and New England: which so alarmed them there, as to send down to New York for a hundred men to strengthen that place;” “The Hinkley Papers,” 5, p. 212.

<sup>327</sup>

“John Prout to the Governor & Council, September 13-19, 1689,” in the Baxter Manuscripts, 4, p. 458, maintains that these units had 64 and 34 Amerindians, respectively; “Letter from Major Benjamin Church, October 7, 1689,” in Ibid., 472; and “Silvanus Davis to Governor and Council, September 22, 1689,” in Ibid., 455. Interestingly enough, the account of Captain Davis, left by Swaine as garrison commander at Casco, of Church’s arrival at Fort Loyall (Falmouth) suggests his rangers included at least one Black as well as Indians

four blockhouses and Fort Loyall which, despite its light cannon, was in bad need extensive repairs.<sup>328</sup> Attempts to clear the intervening country en route had failed since as soon as they sighted the expedition, “the Abenaki warriors disappeared into the fastness of the neighbouring forest.”<sup>329</sup> After reaching Casco, Swaine left a small garrison there while the main body of his militiamen and rangers attempted to clear the abandoned territory eastward towards Pemaquid. This action proved equally fruitless, “the enemy having retired into the howling Desarts where there was no coming at them,” although he succeeded only in recovering the heavy cannon from that fallen outpost.<sup>330</sup> Indeed, despite the presence of some 200 of Swaine’s men in in the region, on 13 September the Abenaki struck the small fort on Oyster River (Durham, New Hampshire) and killed or captured another ninety-four colonists.<sup>331</sup> Three days later, on 16 September, with no reports having arrived from Swaine, Church had already departed, again by sea, with the troops he had raised on his own initiative, to begin the first of his

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P.S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, p. 85; on the armament and condition of the fort, see G. Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, p. 81.

329

G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, p. 171.

330

Quote from Great Britain, Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series: America and West Indies, 1689-1692, p. 203, in P.S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, p. 86.

331

P.S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, p. 85; The figure for losses at Oyster River is given in K.M. Morrison, The Embattled Northeast, p. 143, and is much higher than that given by Thomas Hinckley of Plymouth. In a letter to his wife from Boston on 17 September, he reported : “A little before my coming down, a garrison at Oyster River surprised by the Indians: most of the men out on their occasions taken or killed, and then the garrison, with but one man to guard the women and children; in all, seventeen or eighteen killed and taken;” “The Hinckley Papers,” 5, p. 212.

“Eastward Expeditions” into Maine.<sup>332</sup> Although Church also initially moved to support Fort Loyall and other frontier posts and settlements, his real interest was in carrying the war to the enemy and, when possible, destroying Abenaki villages and their inhabitants, combatants or otherwise. Yet his first campaign also proved unproductive as the enemy again refused head-on battle. Not only were the newly formed rangers unused to the imperatives of forest warfare but, as Church complained to the Massachusetts governor and Council, their native allies often proved fickle so that his advance east from Casco was stymied by a lack of Amerindian scouts familiar with region, or willing to guide him.<sup>333</sup>

In these circumstances the English colonists continued hurriedly abandoning their settlements along the Kennebec and by year’s end only four settlements – Kittery, York, Wells and Casco – remained east of the Piscataqua. With the victorious Abenaki bragging that if supported by a mere two hundred French regulars, they could advance to Boston,<sup>334</sup> an angry Church charged the Massachusetts authorities with inaction in Maine and warned: "If nothing be preformed on the said account (The best way under Correction) is to Demolish the Garrison [i.e., the garrison-houses], and draw off the inhabitants."<sup>335</sup> As a result of such pressures, in February New England’s leaders

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<sup>332</sup>

Thomas Hinckley’s “Letter to his Wife of 17 September, Boston,” in “The Hinckley Papers,” 5, p. 214.

<sup>333</sup>

J. Grenier, The First Way of War, pp. 36-37.

<sup>334</sup>

G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, p. 59.

<sup>335</sup>

Quoted in J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 183.

resolved to launch another joint expedition to the Northeast.<sup>336</sup> By that time, however, their main focus was elsewhere. On 4 December 1689, news of England's formal declaration of war against France finally arrived in Boston, along with some military materiel and a request that all efforts be made to move against the French in the Americas.<sup>337</sup> After all, Britain's new monarch William III of Orange was widely regarded as the head of "the Protestant Cause," was already at war with Louis XIV's "Papist" France, and so hardly disposed to abide with the terms of the Neutrality Treaty (of Whitehall) negotiated by his Stewart predecessor and now opponent James II. Many in Massachusetts agreed and on 6 December, barely two days later, a petition to the General Court requested that it "inquire into ye present state & condition of our said neighbours ye ffrench; and consider what may be proper & necessary for us to doe respecting them, so as to prevent their being capable to make farther depredations on us, & their assisting & supplying our Indian enemies."<sup>338</sup> For their part, most of Massachusetts' militant leaders, desirous of having their Charter reinstated, were anxiously to demonstrate loyalty to their new monarch, and argued that for this purpose there was no "better vehicle ... than an attack on the neighbouring possessions of the French king who was harbouring and supporting the royal pretensions of William's

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<sup>336</sup>

See the "Agreement re: Expedition Against the Indians, February 5, 1689/90," in Baxter Manuscripts, 23, p. 2.

<sup>337</sup>

J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 182.

<sup>338</sup>

As quoted in G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, p. 61..

rivals.”<sup>339</sup>

Such a course satisfied a range of interests, those of the merchants and fishing entrepreneurs included, even though British naval support by now had improved the security of shipping at sea.<sup>340</sup> Even so, the fishing interests still demanded a strike against Acadia and Port Royal, which they regarded as a base for French privateers. In a similar vein, many who believed that the French were instigating, supporting and even directing the Abenaki assaults saw the capture of Acadia and Quebec as a sure means of uprooting at least one major cause of Amerindian hostility, as well as a means of destroying virulent nests of Papists.<sup>341</sup> Such arguments seemed unanswerable and on 16 December the General Court approved the raising of volunteers to reduce Acadia “to the Obedience of there Majties of Great Britain.”<sup>342</sup> Even so, those who shared Church’s concerns still gloomily assessed the likely course of events in 1690. This mood is evident in a letter of early 1690 from Governor Hinkley of Plymouth to an English member of Parliament: “... such is our common poverty, in conjunction with our present extraordinary exigencies (by reason of a war with the Indians, and scarcity by extreme doubt, God's holy hand hath, in our parts especially, brought on us), that we cannot at

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<sup>339</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>340</sup>

See, for example, the report in “Letter to Thomas Hinkley from Samuel Worden, Boston, 17 September 1689,” in “The Hinckley Papers,” 5, p. 224

<sup>341</sup>

The background to the Acadia expedition is discussed in P.S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, pp. 87-90; R.R. Johnson, John Nelson, pp. 57-62; and E.W. Baker and J.G. Reid, The New England Knight, pp. 82-87;

<sup>342</sup>

As quoted in G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, p. 61..

present do anything but render our verbal thanks....”<sup>343</sup> Nonetheless, while appeals for aid from London continued well on into 1690, the colonists simultaneously began organizing an expedition aimed at seizing Acadia and New France, thus decisively ending any lingering hopes that the Whitehall Treaty might shield Acadia from the violence then engulfing Europe.

The irony of this situation was that despite the suspicions, not to say convictions, of New England’s leaders, that the Abenaki were pawns of the Catholic French, the latter were surprisingly slow to realise the military potential presented by these possible allies. Although the English often blamed Jesuits for inciting the Abenaki, the missionaries, with the support of Canadian officials, initially were more interested in having them migrate to join missions in New France where they could provide a buffer against attacks by both English and the Iroquois. This attitude changed radically after the fall of Pemaquid and by 1690 the Minister of Marine had concluded that their real utility might lie in defending Acadia. After Frontenac replaced Denonville as governor in Quebec, the latter returned home to stressed the value of the Jesuits in cementing such an alliance, and thereafter the fathers were encouraged to remain in Maine with their Catholic converts.<sup>344</sup> “The chief advantage derived from us,” the Jesuit Charlevoix wrote a few decades later, “was the irreconcilable breach which they effected between the English and the tribes, of all others on the continent, who enjoyed the highest renown for

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<sup>343</sup>

“Letter from Thomas Hinkley to Sit Henry Ashhurst, Boston, 4 February 1689/1690,” in “The Hinckley Papers,” 5, p. 226.

<sup>344</sup>

K.M. Morrison, The Embattled Northeast, pp.117-124 discusses the formation of the French-Abenaki alliance in considerable detail.

bravery, and whose sincere attachment to the Christian religion and natural docility retained them more easily in our alliance.”<sup>345</sup> Since the Abenaki had their own good reasons for going to war, this undoubtedly overstated the Jesuit role. Whatever the case, French officers taking the field with their new allies in the summer of 1690 reported that these Amerindians were “always masters of the battlefield,” and both Count Frontenac and officials in Versailles, who had decided to defend Acadia, hastened to find ways of providing them with supplies the natives earlier had acquired by trading with the English colonists.<sup>346</sup>

The year 1690 thus opened with leaders in both New England and New France planning military operations that would end by completing the destruction of both the remnants of Andros’ “military frontier” in the Northeastern borderland, and of the still-born French equivalent in Acadia. In this case it was the French that struck first. By the time Frontenac had arrived in Quebec in October 1689, Louis XIV had given up an ambitious plan for a full-scale attack on New York.<sup>347</sup> The new governor’s then set out to achieve a peace with the Iroquois who had spread terror in New France in the previous August by their brutal destruction of the village of Lachine, near Montreal. Although

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<sup>345</sup>

P.F.X. de Charlevoix, History and General Description of New France, 4, pp. 43-44. He also quotes Denonville’s memorial to the minister as crediting the Jesuit missionaries with “the whole success” of his own “enterprises against the English,” and arguing “that there was no wiser course then to attract a great number of these Indians to St. Francis.”

<sup>346</sup>

For the details of these efforts and the problems encountered, see K.M. Morrison, The Embattled Northeast, pp. 124-132.

<sup>347</sup>

P.S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, pp. 76-77.



preferring negotiations, the new governor recognized the importance of a show of strength both “to give the English employment at home, and restore the reputation of the French arms in the minds of the Indians.”<sup>348</sup> He therefore dispatched a force of 210 men, half French, half Amerindian, with orders to strike New York-Manhattan if possible, but if not, at any other English post of the commanders’ choice. When their Amerindian allies ruled out attacking Orange (Albany), the French blow fell in early February 1690 on the seemingly secure -- the attackers found the gate open and unguarded -- frontier settlement of Schenectady. The town was stormed and, as even the Jesuit Charlevoix admits, two hours “of only massacre and pillage” followed in which sixty died, often horribly, and eighty others were carried off as captives.<sup>349</sup> It is generally agreed that this disaster “sent a wave of horror through New England” but, as Philip Haffenden observes, even this proved insufficient to raise alarm in Salmon Falls on the New

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<sup>348</sup>

P.F.X. de Charlevoix, History and General Description of New France, 4, p. 121, who also describes the horrors of the Lachine massacre of the previous August (pp. Ibid, 29-31), as does G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, pp. 110-111. Frustrated and harassed New Englanders generally approved of this atrocity. Writing to his wife from Boston on 17 September 1689, Governor Thomas Hinkley of Plymouth reported: “The Maques [Iroquois], with their army, lately returned from the French with great success; burnt, at a place near Mont Royal, a hundred and twenty-four houses; taken prisoners five hundred men, women, and children, -- two hundred whereof fighting men, -- with the loss thereof of thirteen only of theirs;” “The Hinkley Papers,” 5, p. 212. Other notable accounts of Frontenac’s military plans include Francis Parkman, Count Frontenac and New France Under Louis XIV [1880], preface Oscar Handlin (New York: Beacon Press; n.d.), pp. 184-209, and the more recent W.J. Eccles, Frontenac: The Courtier Governor (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart; 1959, 1968), pp. 198-229.

<sup>349</sup>

P.F.X. de Charlevoix, History and General Description of New France, 4, pp. 121-126, quote p. 125; G.T. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, pp. 115-116; and F. Parkman’s classic account in his Count Fromtenac and New France, pp. 209-219.

Hampshire border.<sup>350</sup>

Frontenac, in fact, had ordered three raiding expeditions and intended the second two to encourage the Abenaki to make greater efforts. The second, organized by Francois Hertel and three of his sons at Three Rivers, comprised twenty-four French and twenty-five Amerindians. Departing at the end of January 1690, in mid-March the raiders surprised the unfortunate inhabitants of Salmon River, who apparently had been lulled by heavy snowfalls into a false sense of safety. Seizing the garrison houses, they killed thirty defenders, burned the village, departed with twenty prisoners, and then dispersed a relief party of 200 colonists from a neighbouring settlement. Hertel then left the main party to join the third raiding party of thirty-five Frenchmen and sixty Quebec Abenaki. Led by the Sieur de Portneuf, this had left Quebec ten days earlier than his own. Together they moved to attack Casco and Port Loyall which, when the village's garrison houses had fallen and a sortie had been repelled, surrendered after a three-day siege at the end of May.<sup>351</sup> As Frontenac had hoped, these raids both terrorized the frontier and encouraged the Abenaki to continue their own war after de Portneuf's departure. With the fall of Casco-Fort Loyall, the last British bastion in the region, the summer of 1690 saw the virtual depopulation of the Maine as the English colonists abandoned almost all settlements northeast of Wells. Only this last, along with York and Kittery held out, although they remained under threat of Abenaki attacks well into the 1700s. Not only

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<sup>350</sup>P.S. Heffenden, New England in the English Nation, p. 86.

<sup>351</sup>

S.A. Drake, Border Wars of New England, pp. 50-52; G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, p. 116. P.F.X. de Charlevoix, History and General Description of New France, 4, pp. 130-137.

had the military frontier created by Andros completely disintegrated, but the English settlements in Maine were in ruins and the Abenaki left free “to attack the New Hampshire frontier repeatedly and without fear of harassment from the east.”<sup>352</sup>

To this extent Frontenac’s raids had achieved their goal. Yet if, as one Quebec historian argues, his real purpose in launching his three strikes had been to impress the Iroquois and win a peace, then they failed as the Confederacy’s war with New France continued unabated, despite the governor’s repeated diplomatic initiatives<sup>353</sup> Furthermore, if another secondary goal had been to force the New Englanders to focus on defending their own frontiers, and in this manner divert them from Port Royal, then his policy had unintended consequences. True, the English colonists were infuriated as well as terrorized by the disasters at Schenectady, Salmon Falls and Casco, for which some even blamed the victims for their lack of vigilance, and by February 1690 they had already had agreed to sent another expedition against the Abenaki in the northeast . But frustrated by their inability to bring their Amerindian enemies to a battleground of their own choosing, and under continuing pressure from influential mercantile, shipping and fishing interests, New England’s leaders again turned their attention to the enemy target most vulnerable to a direct attack.<sup>354</sup> This was Port Royal, and the revived interest in such venture quickly led to an expedition led by Sir William Phips. If English fears of an

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<sup>352</sup>

G. Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, p. 82; J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, p. 183; K.M. Morrison, The Embattles Northeast, pp. 124-125..

<sup>353</sup>G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, pp. 116-118.

<sup>354</sup>

G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts, pp. 64-66; P.A. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, pp. 87-89.

Abenaki-French alliance had proven to be self-fulfilling, so now did French concerns over an assault on Acadia. Although this force again failed to catch the elusive Saint-Castin while en route to Nova Scotia, and if in the autumn a second expedition was rebuffed by Frontenac before Quebec, in May Phips easily forced de Meneval's capitulation at Port Royal.<sup>355</sup> This left France's Acadian military frontier in the same ruins as that built for New England by Andros. Thereafter New Englanders, like their Virginian cousins to the south, defended their now truncated boundaries by a military frontier based on settlements strengthened by garrison houses and stockades, and supported by ranger units, thus giving apparent substance to Turner's contention that the frontier was a line of settlement rather than fortification. Yet the situation with regard to sparsely settled Acadia was very different. After plundering Port Royal, its captors plundered the village, administered perfunctory oaths of allegiance, set up an ineffective puppet administration of local Acadian notables, and returned to Boston.<sup>356</sup> Again, however, these events had unintended consequences for their planners in that it cemented the French-Amerindian alliance that Frontenac's raids had earlier strengthened. Strategists in both Quebec and Paris now recognized the vital significance of the Abenaki for successfully maintaining France's claims in Acadia. There Villebon, who had assumed the role governor, overcame his lack of a firm settlement base and basing himself on the tiny Fort Naxouat on the St. John River, coordinated a continuing guerrilla campaign against New England by mixed French and Abenaki war parties until

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See footnote 263 above.

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E.W. Baker and J.G. Reid, The New England Knight, pp. 86-95.

the short-lived Treaty of Ryswick in 1697.<sup>357</sup> Gustav Lanctot therefore only exaggerates slightly when he concludes: "It could be said that these, 'the bravest of all the Indians,' saved Acadia for France."<sup>358</sup> More importantly for this discussion is the fact that whatever one makes of the alleged merging of the English colonies' military frontiers and expanding line of settlement, France's North American frontiers was of a very different nature, both in Acadia in the 1690s and elsewhere thereafter.<sup>359</sup> Even so, with the end of hostilities in 1697, both sides faced the problem of rebuilding their colonies in the Northeastern-Acadia border zone, and of reestablishing effective military frontiers behind which these could flourish in security, but which simultaneously were flexible enough to permit further geographical expansion of settlement, or trade or both.<sup>360</sup> But however these military frontiers would differ from each other, or from those found in Western Europe at that time, or from the "settlement frontier" as later defined by Frederick Turner, by 1700 the term "frontier" had gained a permanent place in the

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<sup>357</sup>

On this general crisis in the Acadian borderland see the comments J.G. Reid, Acadia, Maine and New Scotland, pp. 181-183, and more briefly, his "An International Region of the Northeast: Rise and Decline, 1635-1762," in S.J. Hornsby, et al., eds., The Northeastern Borderlands, pp. 20-23.

<sup>358</sup>

G. Lanctot, History of Canada, 2, p. 171.

<sup>359</sup>

The nature of the French-American trading frontier is discussed at length in William John Eccles, The Canadian Frontier, 1534-1760 (Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press; 1969).

<sup>360</sup>

In either respect, Turner is quite correct in stressing the difference between North America's frontiers and those of the more densely populated Western Europe of the day. Similarities might emerge, however, in comparisons with Medieval Spain, Eastern Europe and the Balkans, along with the Scottish Highlands and Ireland in the 1500s-1600s, and with Russian Central Asia and the Far East before 1880 and 1905.

common military-political parlance of North America.

**CHAPTER II:  
THE AMERICAN BACKCOUNTRY, "WESTWARD  
MOVEMENT," AND FREDERICK JACKSON TURNER**

Americans are always moving on.  
It's an old Spanish custom gone astray,  
A sort of English fever, I believe.  
Or just a mere desire to take French leave,  
I couldn't say. I couldn't really say.  
But, when the whistle blows, they go away.  
Sometimes there never was a whistle blown,  
But they don't care, for they can blow their own  
Whistles of willow-stick and rabbit-bone,  
Quail-calling through the rain  
A dozen tunes but only one refrain,  
"We don't know where we're going, but we're on our way!"

\* \* \*

So, when you ask about Americans,  
I cannot tell their motives or their plans  
Or make a neat design of what they are.  
I only see the fortune and the bane,  
The fortune of the breakers of the earth,  
The doom arisen with the western star.

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Star in the West, fool's silver of the sky,  
Desolate lamp above the mountain pass  
Where the trail falters and the oxen die,  
Spiked plane on the prairie of wild grass,  
Flower of frost, flower of rock and ice,  
Red flower over the blood sacrifice.

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Star-rocket, bursting when the dawn was grey,  
Will-o'-the wisp that led the riflemen  
Westward and westward, killing down the day,  
Until at last, they had to turn again,  
Burnt out like their own powder in the quest  
Because there was no longer any West.

--- Excerpts from Stephen Vincent Benet, Stephan Vincent, *Western Star* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart; 1943), pp. 3, 7-8.

The term “frontier,” then, entered the North American glossary during the latter 1600s and, at that time, referred to a territorial political boundary and fortified “state” border which defended claims of sovereignty. To be sure, in “New World” conditions, this usually meant a zone or “borderland” in which the drawing of a recognized boundary was in itself the frequent cause of conflict, be it between colonists and natives or representatives of competing European imperial powers. Whatever the case, the term frontier not unnaturally had retained its military-political-territorial connotation, and during the 1600s was usually seen as separating the area of European colonial settlement from that of the “uncivilized” and subdued “wilderness.” Frederick Jackson Turner himself admits as much, but argues that by 1690 “it was already evident that the frontier of settlement and the frontier of military defense were coinciding” to form a new form of “frontier” in the form of a gradually advancing line of settlement.<sup>1</sup>

As suggested above, however, his formulation simplifies matters considerably. Thus in colonial Virginia, where no serious cross-border threat existed for some sixty years after Bacon’s Rebellion of 1676, efforts to maintain a military frontier along the easily geographically identified “Fall Line” aimed as much at controlling, and even at constraining the advance of settlement into the Piedmont, and settlement along that line was long promoted only as a way of reducing the expenses involved in maintaining that frontier. Elsewhere, however, claims to sovereignty came into conflict with those of

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<sup>1</sup> Frederick Jackson Turner, “The First Official Frontier of the Massachusetts Bay,” Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 17 (April 1914), pp. 250-271, as republished in F.J. Turner, The Frontier in American History (New York: Henry Holt; 1920, 1953; reprinted, Mineola, NY: Dover Publications; 1996), p. 41.



powerful neighbours as occurred in the case in the Northeast or Acadian borderland. Here the defining of borders and building of military frontiers led to regional tensions which then mixed with larger imperial rivalries, and ended by involving the colonies in open conflicts with each other, both on their own behalf and that of their imperial homelands. But regardless, as the French and English documents make clear, by the 1680s both Paris and London, or their representatives on the spot, dreamed of upholding their respective imperial pretensions by the creation military “frontiers” in North America which, as in Europe, were to be guaranteed by fortresses and fortified outposts placed at particularly important advanced positions and strategic “choke-points.”

#### **North American Military Frontiers After 1690**

Turner’s assertions to the contrary, in North America as Europe, the term frontier continued to retain its political-military connotations until at least the 1860s-1870s, and only apparently began to be directly associated with the process of settlement thereafter. Throughout the preceding centuries, dreams of an effective fortified defensive border remained mirages thanks to the vast distances and numerous natural difficulties involved, as well as the presence of a third military factor in the form of powerful Amerindian confederacies that often, seemingly at least, held the balance of regional power. After a number of false starts, for example, the vision of French planners had achieved only a partial realization in the 1750s. Again, before that time it was Virginia’s relative isolation, not the strength of its frontier defenses, that ensured that colony’s comparative security. To the north, where borders remained considerably more fluid, we have seen that after 1686, Governor Edmund Andros of the Dominion of New England

had taken similar steps to those in Virginia along the northeastern borders of his province as well. Although his efforts collapsed as a result of England's "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, and the outbreak of the first of New England's "border wars"<sup>2</sup> -- better known either as the "First French and Indian" or "King William's" War -- after 1689-1690 the term "frontier" was used with increasing frequency in colonial English military discussions as the colonial wars grew in intensity.

Only a handful of New England's leaders appreciated the significance of Andros' conception of a fortified frontier. This is particularly true of the two later governors Sir William Phips and Joseph Dudley. Both envisaged forts as the first-line of defense along their porous borders, backed by fortified settlements in a secondary role, and as supports for offensive counter-raids and larger military operations. Yet most politicians opposed such projects as overly costly, and instead threw their support behind Church and other proponents of the extensive use of rangers to carry the war into the Wilderness against the lairs of their evasive opponents.<sup>3</sup> Needless to say, ranger operations under Church

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For this terminology see, for instance, Samuel Adams Drake, The Border Wars of New England, commonly called King William's and Queen Anne's Wars ( Boston:, 1897. Reprint: Williamstown, MA: Corner House Publishers; 1973).

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As Guy Chet recently commented: "The diligence with which Andros, Phips and Dudley fortified the frontier demonstrates that responsible military leaders in the colonies appreciated the wisdom and efficacy of European conventions." Conversely, he charges, throughout his career Church "berated his superiors for their infatuation with fortification and positional defence," and points out that as early as King Philip's War, Church had insisted that "rather than being positions of military might commanding their surroundings, forts were 'nests for destruction' for the besieged defenders;" Guy Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness: The Triumph of European Warfare in the Colonial Northeast (Amherst, NH. and Boston: University of Massachusetts; 2003), note 117, p. 179. This debate continues among historians to the present day: Whereas Chet stresses the value of forts, others virtually ignore them, thus dismissing their

and others continued but despite the opposition, new forts were built at Saco and Pemaquid. The latter, raised by Governor Phips on the direct orders of King William III and christened as Fort William Henry in 1692, was one of the most powerful British colonial forts of the period. This new structure had a wall with a circumference of 737 feet (225m) that was 22 feet high (6.7m) and six feet (1.8m) thick facing the sea, ten feet (3m) elsewhere, with a 29-foot (9m) two-story stone corner-tower and 28 gun-ports. Armed with eighteen mounted heavy guns (of which six were 18-pounders), it easily withstood a French attack in its first year, but succumbed after only a token resistance in 1696 to another expedition led by Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville.<sup>4</sup> Yet such works were costly – William Henry had cost £80,000, which still remained part of the Massachusetts debt in by 1702 – and hence were very unpopular with legislators.<sup>5</sup> In that spring the energetic and ambitious Dudley arrived as the new governor and, learning of the outbreak of a new Anglo-French conflict some six days later, he determined to advance

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significance, and focus instead almost entirely on the use of rangers; see, for instance, Armstrong Starkey, European and Native American Warfare, 1675-1815 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 1998), and John Grenier, The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier, 1607-1814 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 2005).

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Ibid., pp. 71-72; S.A. Drake, Border Wars of New England, pp. 83-85; J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America: The Forts that Defended America, 1600 to the Present, illus. Tomasz Idzikowski (Cambridge, MA: Perseus-Da Capo Books; 2004), pp. 60-61; Philip S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, 1689-1713 (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1974), pp. 104-107; and Emerson W. Baker and John Graham Reid, The New England Knight: Sir William Phips, 1651-1695 (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; pp. 161-166, 170-174, which stresses Phips' personal commitment to, and participation in this project.

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P.S. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, pp. 219-220, fn. 1.

Great Britain's interests. To this end he immediately licenced local privateers to attack French shipping in Acadian waters, reinforced the garrisons of existing frontier posts, took steps to negotiate with the Abenaki, and began agitating for a new expedition against Port Royal, which had reverted to France by the treaty of 1697.<sup>6</sup>

As part of this program Dudley also demanded the reconstruction of the fort at Pemaquid, but in this was blocked by the Massachusetts Assembly. If his subsequent efforts to unify and centralise Massachusetts' three-tiered (metropolitan, provincial and town) defence establishment, like his military campaigns, also often fell far short of success, he still managed to considerably strengthen his province's coastal works, and to a much lesser extent, some inland works as well.<sup>7</sup> These last, in fact, changed little from those used in King Philip's War: after the outbreak of the Abenaki war and rapid collapse of Andros' posts in 1688-1690 the English settlers again resorted to building "garrison houses," often supplemented by stockades, to defend their exposed townships and settlements. Thereafter, as the first major French and Indian War gained in momentum, the official colonial records refer with increasing frequency to "Military" or "Frontier Towns" with increasing frequency. In 1690, for example, a committee of the Massachusetts General Court recommended that the Court "order what shall be the frontier and ... maintain a committee to settle garrisons on the frontier with forty soldiers to each frontier town as the main guard." An act of March 1694/1695 designated eleven

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Ibid., pp. 208-226; G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, pp. 92-96.

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G. Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, pp. 97-99. The development of New England's fortifications from 1700 to 1754 are briefly reviewed in J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 60-62.

such towns that included Wells, York and Kittery to the east, and Deerfield, Amesbury, Haverhill, Dunstable, Groton, Chelmsford, Lancaster, Marlborough and Springfield. In all these cases, if their inhabitants withdrew during a crisis without the Court's and governor's specific permission, their lands were forfeit, or if had none, they were subject to imprisonment. When this law was reenacted five years later, in March 1699/1700, another ten towns were added, including many "tho' they be not frontiers as those towns first named, yet lye more open than many others to an attack of an Enemy."<sup>8</sup> Similarly, in New York Albany and Schenectady were so designated in 1689 and in 1704, during "Queen Anne's War," another seven in Connecticut while, as we have seen, a similar model evolved along the Virginian Fall Line frontier. As a result, Turner argues, by the early 1700s it "is possible to trace this military cordon from the Carolinas ..., still neighboring the coast," and by the mid-1720s that these "'frontier Towns' were preparing to swarm."<sup>9</sup>

All this is evidence of the fact that as during King Philip's War, in 1689-1690 the English still often "inhabited open villages" so that the "only one practicable plan of

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"F.J. Turner, "The First Official Frontier of the Massachusetts Bay," pp. 41-43; Kent Ladd Steckmesser, The Westward Movement: A Short History (New York: McGraw-Hill; 1969), p. 38, and Frederick Merk, History of the Western Movement (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 1978), p. 40. David Jaffee, People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History and Memory, 1630-1860 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University; 1999), pp. 79-85, offers a case study of Lancaster..

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"F.J. Turner, "The First Official Frontier of the Massachusetts Bay," pp. 41-43, 47, 53; Kent Ladd Steckmesser, The Westward Movement: A Short History (New York: McGraw-Hill; 1969), p. 38, and Frederick Merk, History of the Western Movement (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 1978), p. 40. David Jaffee, People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History and Memory, 1630-1860 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University; 1999), pp. 79-85, offers a case study of Lancaster..

defence” was again the “garrison house.” With their loopholes and projecting upper stories, these structures became commonplace within such settlements, with some being surrounded by log stockades and blockhouses or “flankers” at the corners as well. Sometimes these were built specifically for the purpose, but often “certain houses, better adapted or more favorably situated for the purpose than others” were simply converted into “so many rallying points for all the rest, thus turning mere dwellings into what were called garrisons.” And as Samuel Drake wrote two centuries later (in the 1890s):

“Exquisitely homely as these structures seem to-day, nothing could more forcibly press home the startling fact that in them the sole dependence of a settlement often lay, or in what a decisive sense every man's house was his castle”<sup>10</sup> The reality behind this metaphor is evident from the fact that by the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, hardly a single settlement “remained physically untouched by French and Indian raiders” from the forward post at Pemaquid in the northeast to Hampton. Indeed, in Maine only three townships – York, Kittery and Wells – had remained inhabited throughout the years 1689-1713, and this despite the losses in life and property sustained during the sporadic Abenaki and French raids, the threat of which was alleviated only partially even during periods of relative peace. The same was true of most towns outside of Portsmouth in New Hampshire. If the worst such attack was a slaughter that “nearly crippled” York in 1692, the Oyster River settlement of Durham in New Hampshire – despite the lesson of 1690 – suffered a second devastating strike in 1694, and a similar blow struck the better prepared settlement of Wells early in Queen Anne's War in

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<sup>10</sup>S.A. Drake, The Border Wars of New England, p. 2.

1703<sup>11</sup>.

Nonetheless, despite the continuing threat, farmer-townsmen-militiamen disliked signing up for extended periods of service and even the threats of loss of lands or imprisonment did not prevent many from deserting the “Frontier Towns.”<sup>12</sup> Throughout, of course, efforts naturally continued to carry the war to the enemy, fueled by religious exhortations and such measures as the creation of “ranger” companies in Massachusetts, Connecticut and elsewhere, as well as through the payment of bounties for Indian scalps. But recruitment for these units, too, was often difficult and the results achieved often disappointing, and sometimes minimal.<sup>13</sup> The same was largely true of the more direct attacks on the perceived enemy citadels at Port Royal and Quebec were regard to launched in 1690 and 1710-1711. Yet though Port Royal fell on both occasions, Quebec withstood the siege on the first while an English expedition failed to reach this objective

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<sup>11</sup>

Charles E. Clark, The Eastern Frontier: The Settlement of Northern New England, 1610-1763 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 1970), pp. 68-69.

<sup>12</sup>

For developments in this region throughout the colonial period in general, see C.E. Clark’s pioneering study, The Eastern Frontier. The nature of life in such fortified houses and blockhouses on the frontier is described in Peter Silver, Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America (New York and London: W.W. Norton; 2008), pp. 48-52. A useful introduction to other recent research on the early American “frontiers” is Edward R.L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute, eds., Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina; 1998), which also provides a good bibliography (pp. 361-380).

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A. Starkey, European and Native American Warfare, pp. 80-92; J. Grenier, The First Way of War, pp. 29-43.

on the second.<sup>14</sup> During 1689 and 1713, and despite brief attempts at resettling abandoned townships in 1699 and 1700, New England's Northeastern frontier therefore contracted sharply. As during 1675-1676, throughout these years numerous refugees, now landless and utterly impoverished, trickled from the frontier into Boston and the surrounding towns to swell the crowd needing public support from the citizens of these more secure havens. As one historian observes, This was only the "most immediate and obvious result" of the period's conflicts." For, he continues:

Scarcely a man emerged free from some devastating effect of war upon his family, fortune, or person. No social institution remained unaffected. The official records of the period, whether of town meeting, selectmen, court, provincial council, legislature, or governors, provide forceful reminders that war and its effects demanded an overwhelming share of public and private attention. The fact that northern New England was a battleground during almost forty years surrounding the turn of the eighteenth century, and again between 1744 and 1760, determined in great part the region's landscape, its economics, its social development, and its politics.<sup>15</sup>

Yet if New France survived New England's expeditions and the dangers of life on what had become the latter's de facto military frontier remained, overall, the garrison houses had fulfilled their mission..

As a consequence, by end of Queen Anne's War (or the War of the Spanish Succession) in 1713, the hinterland of Massachusetts still occupied, be it sparsely in places, an area stretching as far as Lancaster, while the borders of the Connecticut

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See E.W. Baker and J.G. Reid, The New England Knight, pp. 86-109; John G. Reid, et al. The 'Conquest' of Acadia, 1710: Imperial, Colonial, and Aboriginal Constructions (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 2004), and Gerald S. Graham, ed. and intro., The Walker Expedition to Quebec, 1711 (Toronto, Ont. and London: Champlain Society (vol. 32) and Naval Records Society; 1953).

<sup>15</sup>

C.E. Clark, Eastern Frontier, pp. 68-69.



Valley settlements had pushed into New Hampshire, and up the coast to the Penobscot.<sup>16</sup> Thereafter references to the “frontiers” gradually grow both in number and intensity. Even so, and despite the building of occasional individual “provincial forts, the colonies generally followed the practices of 1690-1713 and so did little to create coordinated fortified frontier lines along their ragged borders. This task would be left to the officials and generals sent by London to the administer and protect the frontiers of the overseas empire. Then, as French, fort-building continued apace, use of the term “frontier” became commonplace at all levels of the colonial populace, especially during the last great “French and Indian War of the 1750s, as well as during the subsequent westwards push of settlers into the Indian Territories of the vast trans-Appalachian Wilderness.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, while native North Americans or “Indians” long represented one major aspect of the perceived threat, throughout the length of the continent both London and her colonists frequently had to deal directly with those enemies’ European backers as well.

Furthermore, imperial planners in Britain, France and Spain still tended to conceive of operations in America in the same ways as they did those on the Continent.<sup>18</sup> Concrete evidence of this is the string of French forts built at the direction of Paris that stretched

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<sup>16</sup>

F. Merk, History of the Western Movement, p. 41.

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On the relationship between French measures and British initiatives in the early to mid-1750s, see the recent discussion in Eric Hinderaker and Peter C. Mancall, At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University; 2003), pp. 100-106.

<sup>18</sup>

A. Starkey, European and Native American Warfare, p. 86.

initially from Port Royal, and after 1719 from Louisbourg in Nova Scotia, up the St. Lawrence, along a network of inland lakes and portages to finish by following the Mississippi down to the Gulf of Mexico and the forts of New Orleans and Mobile. Reminiscent of the continental European model, it was in reality the great French military engineer Sebastian Vauban's strategic concept and practical designs translated into the New World to form a new, defensive military frontiere. But in this case, this chain of forts and fortified posts was first largely intended to deter moves against the Quebec-Montreal base, and secondly to extend and defend a commercial empire based on trade with the Amerindians from any possible advance into the interior by the Anglo-American colonists and, finally, as a counter to England's maritime supremacy. Since this last was one of Canada's "greatest misfortunes," wrote a senior colonial official in reviewing New France's strategic position in 1750, "the true remedy would be, to place the Colony generally in a position to overawe those in possession of England, and to make her fear war in America."<sup>19</sup> As was the case with most such frontiers elsewhere, France's installations therefore were so situated as to also serve as bases for strikes against the border (frontier) settlements of the English colonies.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, in the

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M. de la Galissonnière, "Memoir on the French Colonies in North America," December 1750, in E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., Documents to the Colonial History of the State of New York procured in Holland, England and France by John Romeyn Brodhead, Esq., 15 vols. (Albany, NY: Weed, Parsons; 1853-1887), 10, p. 227.

<sup>20</sup>

A stimulating review of France's continuing attempt to create an extended fortified frontiere in North America after the loss of Acadia in 1710 is provided in John Keegan, Warpaths: Travels of a Military Historian in North America (Toronto, Ont.: Key Porter Books; 1995), pp. 69-142. For more technical accounts, see J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 13-38, and Christopher Duffy, The Fortress in the Age of Vauban and Frederick the Great, 1660-1789: Siege Warfare, Volume II

south other mixed traditional European and Indian-style frontier confrontations existed where a third European power, Spain, competed with both France and Britain along the Georgia and Gulf coasts, and also faced native alliances in the Mississippi basin and elsewhere.<sup>21</sup>

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(London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1985), pp. 262-274. Seymour I. Schwartz, The French and Indian War, 1754-1763: The Imperial Struggle for North America (New York: Simon and Schuster; 1994), has excellent illustrations and maps illustrating the French frontier forts and their English opposites. The history of French posts in the central sector is found in W.A. Hunter, Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier, 1753-1758, pp. 61-167; Guy Omerson Coolidge, The French Occupation of the Champlain Valley from 1609 to 1759 (Fleischmanns, NY: Blue Mountain Press; 1999) pp. 115-170; S.H.P. Pell, Fort Ticonderoga: A Short History (Lake George, NY: Fort Ticonderoga Museum; 1957), and, more generally, Ian K. Steel, Guerillas and Grenadiers: The Struggle for Canada, 1689-1760 (Toronto, Ont.: Ryerson Press; 1969), esp. pp. 37-60. That of another French frontier fort at the southern end of the chain is provided by Daniel H. Thomas, Fort Toulouse: The French Outpost at the Alabamas on the Coosa, new intro. Gregory A. Waselkov (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama; 1989). Those in the northeast are described by John Clarence Webster, The Forts of Chignecto: A Study of the Eighteenth Century Conflict between France and Britain in Acadia (St. John-Shediac, NB: Author, 1930); Chris M. Hand, The Siege of Fort Beausejour, 1755 (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane-New Brunswick Military Heritage Project; 2004); and John Stewart McLennan, Louisbourg, from its Foundation to its Fall, 1713-1758 (London: Macmillan; 1918). Reprint: (Halifax, NS: Book Room; 1983).

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A good introduction to both the Georgia and Gulf Coast frontiers is Paul E. Hoffman, Florida's Frontiers (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 2002). Otherwise, on the struggle for Georgia see Jefferson Randolph Anderson, The Genesis of Georgia: An Historical Sketch (Savannah, GA: Georgia Historical Society; 1929); John E. Worth, The Struggle for the Georgia Coast: An Eighteenth-Century Spanish Retrospective on Guale and Mocama, intro. David Hurst Thomas (Athens, GA: American Museum of Natural History-University of Georgia; 1995); and John Oliphant, Peace and War on the Anglo-Cherokee Frontier, 1756-63 (Basingstoke, Hamps: Palgrave; 2001). The situation on the Gulf Coast is outlined in Robert S. Weddle, "Kingdoms Face to Face: French Mobile and Spanish Pensacola, 1699-1799," The Alabama Review, 55 (April 2002), No. 2, pp. 84-95; Ernest F. Dibble and Earle W. Newton, eds., Spain and her Rivals on the Gulf Coast (Pensacola, FL: Historic Pensacola Preservation Board; 1971); and after 1763, in Colin G. Calloway, The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America (Oxford and New York: Oxford University; 2006), pp. 133-149.

Both the French and Spanish efforts were largely directed and financed by the home governments and their colonial executives in Quebec and Havana. The case was different with Britain's Atlantic coastal colonies. There, the methods of raising "provincial troops" and fortifying their shifting interior boundaries as "frontiers," when this became necessary, were left to the colonial governors and legislatures until the mid-1750s. As a result, the techniques pioneered along the New England border in the 1690s reappeared all along the interior edge of the vaguely and often extravagantly defined territories of the chain of English colonies stretching southward into Georgia and the Carolinas.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, by pushing into the western Wilderness, the backwoodsmen roused the hostility of these regions' Amerindian inhabitants and had to create their own village-forts (like the early "frontier towns of Massachusetts) to provide refuge for settlers when necessary. In some places these might comprise a single blockhouse, with only one or two cabins; in others, a range of cabins along one side of a rectangle, with

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As Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt points out in The Winning of the West, 1: From the Alleghenies to the Mississippi, 1769-1776 (n.p.: Bibliobazaar; 2006), pp. 149-152, Virginia, "under her charter, claimed that her boundaries ran across to the South Seas, to the Pacific Ocean," and therefore sought to control most of the North American interior. This led to disputes with neighbouring Pennsylvania that by the early 1770s threatened to become an intracolonial war. The extensive and vague nature of these colonial frontiers are demonstrated by John Mitchell's map of "British and French Dominions in North America" in Paul E. Cohen, Mapping the West: America's Westward Movement, 1524-1890, intro. David Rumsey (New York: Rizzoli International; 2002), pp. 58-60.

The issue of administrating these "backlands," or rather of transforming them into "property" through surveys and the demarcating of boundaries, was a major problem for the founding fathers of the 1780s, and is a major theme in Andro Linklater's recent The Fabric of America: How Our Borders and Boundaries Shaped the the Country and Forged Our National Identity (New York: Walker and Company; 2007). The more general political crisis provoked by Virginian claims is described in Irving Brant, James Madison and American Nationalism (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand; 1968), pp. 38-56.

stockades on the other three supported by blockhouses as “flankers.”<sup>23</sup> In either case, such “frontier” posts were manned not by regular British or often, even colonial Provincial militiamen, but by the backwoodsmen themselves. It was these latter, we are told, who “for the most part, formed the cordon along the Ohio river on the frontiers of Pennsylvania, Virginia and Kentucky, who defended the country against the attacks of the Indians” before, during and even after the American Revolution. The Reverend Joseph Doddridge rather inaccurately called them the country’s “janizaries” inasmuch as “they were soldiers, when they choose to be so, and when they chose laid down their arms,” and less inaccurately adds that their service “was voluntary and of course received no pay.”<sup>24</sup>

It is in this period – between c. 1690 and 1755 – that the Anglo-American military “frontier” most closely coincides with the edge of settlement in the backcountry or Western Wilderness. Apart from traders and occasional missionaries or visionaries, the inhabitants of the earlier-settled seaboard strip only paid attention to affairs on the

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These forts are described in Joseph Doddridge’s memoir of 1824, entitled Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars Of the Western Parts of Virginia and Pennsylvania from 1763 to 1783, inclusive, together with a Review of the State of Society and Manners of the First Settlers of the Western Country, with a Memoir of the Author by His Daughter Narcissa Doddridge, Republished with the addition of new and valuable material, By James S. Ritenour and Wm. T. Lindsey (Pittsburgh, PA: 1912; facsimile reprint, Bowie, MD: Heritage Books; 1988), pp. 94-96. Also see the comments in T. Roosevelt, The Winning of the West, 1, pp. 91-92.

<sup>24</sup>

J. Doddridge, Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars, p. 142. His reference to backwoodsmen-soldiers as “janizaries” is some surprising. The janissaries, in fact, were the regular or standing military core of the armies of Ottoman Turkish armies during the 1500s-1600s, and comprised a corps of converted Muslims who had been Christian youths forcibly conscripted from the empire’s Balkan provinces; see Godfrey Goodwin, The Janissaries (London: Saqi Books; 1997).

borders at times of major warfare, and otherwise largely left the settlers to their own devices, military and otherwise.<sup>25</sup> But rather than a “line” of advancing settlement, the long-hunters, traders and backwoods settlers only made scattered forays, as Teddy Roosevelt puts it, “pressing in on the line of least resistance, first taking possession of the debatable hunting-grounds lying between the Algonquins of the north and the Appalachian confederacies of the south.” Only then, he continues, did they begin “to encroach on the actual tribal territories,” with “every step ... [being] accompanied by stubborn and bloody fighting.” As a consequence, Trans-Appalachia became a contested borderland between newcomers and earlier inhabitants (and at times, between the Anglo-American newcomers themselves), and one in which backwoodsmen at times eventually found it necessary to create their own governmental institutions.<sup>26</sup> Otherwise, even the normal institutions of law and order often were absent so that some pioneers were more endangered by freebooting bandits, like the Owens’ gang that finally succumbed to Daniel Boone and his fellows, then they were by the natives.<sup>27</sup> As a consequence, the virtues associated with the “frontiersman” by our modern tradition were indeed at a

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See, for example, the early career of a leading Indian trader, and his relations with his early Eastern seaboard backers, in Albert T. Volwiler, George Croghan and the Western Movement, 1741-1782 (Lewisburg, PA: Wennawoods Publishing; 2000), pp.17-54,

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See Roosevelt’s “heroic” assessment in his The Winning of the West, 2: From the Alleghanies to the Missississippi, 1777-1783 (n.p.: Kessinger Publishing; n.d.), pp. 236-238, 242-248.

<sup>27</sup>

Randell Jones, In the Footsteps of Daniel Boone (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair; 2005), pp. 82-84. Others, like the bankrupt Indian trader George Croghan, sought refuge on the frontier precisely because of this distance from authority; see A.T. Volwiler, George Croghan and the Westward Movement, pp. 47-48.

premium. Nonetheless, in many ways the situation in the “backcountry,” with its widely separated settlements and mix of pioneer and native inhabitants, long resembled New England before King Philip’s War than some steadily if raggedly advancing settlement frontier as envisaged by Turner and his followers.<sup>28</sup>

In some regions this borderland regime remained in place until the early 1800s. But by the early 1750s, with another French and Indian War in the offing, and French pressures in the west and northwest increasing, official British attention focused more directly on the colonies’ periphery and accordingly, signs of a more formal Anglo-American military “frontier” quickly emerged. In this growing crisis, to better secure their “frontiers,” the English colonies once again had to mobilize their individual resources, consider combining these against their common enemies, and the necessity of seeking aid from London. That usage of “frontiers” in a military context was not exceptional is evident from any number and types of documents emanating from both London and the colonies. At that time, for example, authorities in New York faced a growing French presence on the Lake Champlain route and elsewhere, and warned of “the defenceless state of the Northern Frontiers of this Province.” Since an earlier post at Saraghtogo on the Hudson had been abandoned, they pointed out, there was no fort protecting Albany from a French and Indian attack based on their fort at Crown Point.

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For contemporary accounts of conditions in the Kentucky-Ohio “backcountry” at this time, see “Part I: Europeans Discover Ohio, 1750-1782,” in Emily Foster, ed., The Ohio Frontier: An Anthology of Early Writings (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky; 1996), and especially “The Burning of Pickawillany: Captain William Trent’s Journal of his Trip from Logstown to Pickawillany, 1752” pp. 15-18, and “An Early Tourist: The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell, 1775,” pp.41-48.

Lieutenant Governor De Lancey therefore requested that apart from stationing a regiment in the colony, London send instructions to “the several Governors of New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts Bay and New Hampshire,” calling on them “to use their utmost endeavors to bring their Assemblies to furnish their quotas” for the construction of a chain of several counter-forts “to be garrisoned by the King’s troops but victualled by the provinces.”<sup>29</sup> Having already considered other similar proposals to this same effect, English colonial officials had already responded at the end of October that

With regard to securing the Frontiers, we cannot take upon us to say whether all or what part of the forts proposed by New York may be immediately necessary; but we think ... that one at least should be erected at Tirondequat; that the harbour there should be fortified and that armed vessels, superior in strength and number to those the French may have upon the Lake be forthwith built, to command the navigation and secure to us a free and open communication and correspondence with the Indians.<sup>30</sup>

Even so, London believed that still more resolute action was needed to the west and south. This is indicated by the secret instructions provided on 25 December 1754 “for Our Trusty and Wellbeloved Edward Braddock, Esq.,” who was appointed to command all British troops in North America. Although England was still formally at peace with France, these instructions envisaged mounting expeditions against various sections of the that nation’s American frontiere and the latter’s replacement by a string of English

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<sup>29</sup>

Letter from Lieutenant-Governor De Lancey to Sir Thomas Robinson, New York, 15 December, 1754, , in E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., Documents to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 6, pp. 922-923.

<sup>30</sup>

Memorandum of Dunk Halifax, et al., Whitehall, 29 October 1754, in E.B. O’Callaghan, ed., Documents to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 6, p. 920.



outposts. To this end Major-General Braddock was to establish his own logistical base and move rapidly to prevent French efforts “to reinforce the several Posts they now have on the River Ohio, and on the lakes to the Westward of it” via the Mississippi. With the French then driven from their Ohio posts, Braddock himself was to “take the proper measures for erecting a good and sufficient Fort, on the most convenient pass, upon the said River, and you will leave a strong garrison consisting of the three Independent Companies now in Virginia, sustained by such a part, or the whole of the Provincial Troop, as you shall find necessary, to defend the same, & to protect the Indians as well as our settlements, which have lately been broke up.” This accomplished, the general’s “next service, which is of the greatest importance, was to reduce the French forts at Niagara, Crown Point and Lake Champlain, and replace them with British posts and, building a fleet if necessary, make “His Maj-ty’s subjects masters of Lake Ontario.” In this manner he would not only cut the lines of communications between Quebec and the French forces along the Mississippi, and so “secure the Back settlements, but likewise bring back those Indians, who have fallen off from Our interest, and joined the French.” Finally, Braddock was to communicate with Colonel Lawrence in Nova Scotia and, using the available Provincial Troops, destroy the French fort at Beausejour, thus “recovering our province of Nova Scotia.”<sup>31</sup>

That such a grand imperial strategy was at best unrealistic, or that it ended in a

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E.B. O'Callaghan, ed., Documents relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 6, pp. 920-922.

disaster for Britain everywhere but Nova Scotia, is not the point here.<sup>32</sup> Rather, these instructions are evidence that London finally recognized the dangers posed by the French system of frontier forts, and had decided to respond in kind. In the event, even before formak Anglo-French hostilities finally erupted, after Braddock's defeat the French posts already were serving as jumping-off points for raids that devastated the Anglo-American backcountry, and Benjamin Franklin was urging that Quaker Pennsylvania raise troops to meet the threat of an "Indian War on the Frontiers."<sup>33</sup> Yet such units did little to improve matters and in 1757, the Pennsylvania Assembly's message to Governor William Denny of 28 September complained bitterly about the poor performance of that colony's Provincial Troops. Facing public fears of continued raids, the members rhetorically asked

what service has been done by those Troops? What Protection has the Province received from them? Have they relieved the Frontier Inhabitants from the insupportable Burthens of keeping watch Day and Night at their own Expence? Or has a single Indian been killed or taken Prisoner by them, tho' our enemies have been continually committing Depredations on

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Most military historians have agreed that as E. Hinderaker and P.C. Mancall, At the Edge of Empire, p. 106, put it, these "orders were impossible for even the most experienced and able officer. With Braddock in command, they were a recipe for disaster." Also see the recent comments of Matthew C. Ward, Breaking the Backcountry: The Seven Years' War in Virginia and Pennsylvania, 1754-1765 (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh; 2003), pp. 37-45, and G. Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, pp. 118-130.

33

Benjamin Franklin, "Self-Defense and Moral Scruples," in Edward K. Eckert, ed., In War and Peace: An American Military History Anthology (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing; 1990), p. 16. The situation along Pennsylvania borders-frontiers at this time are detailed in James H. Merrell, Into the American Woods: Negotiators on the Pennsylvania Frontier (New York and London: W.W. Norton; 1999), chapter 6, especially pp. 225-230.

the Frontier, and constantly murdering the People?<sup>34</sup>

Thanks to this same threat, Virginia also again sought security through a military frontier based on forts or fortified frontier posts. As George Washington informed one Captain Hog in a letter of July 1756, that province's "Assembly has voted a chain of Forts to be built on the Frontier, [and] the Governor has ordered out the Militia of Augusta to assist you in erecting them...." These, he continued, were to run "to the Southward of Fort Dinwiddie , extending the Line towards Mayo River as directed by the Assembly."<sup>35</sup>

Clearly, then, all these as well as other similar posts elsewhere along other Anglo-American colonies' presumed inland borders, represent attempts to transform the colonies' usually ill-defined wilderness "borders" into rudimentary "military-political frontiers" in the European sense, and not some conscious efforts directed at expanding the fringe of farming settlements.<sup>36</sup> The situation changed drastically in the wake of France's defeat and the Peace of Paris in 1763. Having crushed the Indian resistance led by Pontiac, in that October Britain sought to prevent further such conflicts by a Royal Proclamation that established a new frontier between her Atlantic colonies and the

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<sup>34</sup>

Quoted in William A. Hunter, Forts on the Pennsylvania Frontier, 1753-1758 (Lewisburg, PA: Wennawoods Publishing; 1999), p. 212.

<sup>35</sup>

Quoted in Louis K. Koontz, The Virginia Frontier, 1754-1763 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University; 1925), p. 118.

<sup>36</sup>

For contemporary insights into the problems involved see Paul A.W. Wallace, ed., Thirty Thousand Miles with John Heckewelder, or Travels among the Indians of Pennsylvania, New York & Ohio in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century (Lewisburg, PA: Wennawoods Publishing; 1998). Heckewelder was a Moravian missionary.

Indian lands to the west.<sup>37</sup> Despite London's best efforts to the contrary, and a renewal of these restrictions by the Quebec Act of 1774,<sup>38</sup> the tide of migration across the Appalachians grew in strength after 1763 and the pressure of pioneers upon the native inhabitants increased, as did the settlers' resentment over the efforts of British officials to stem or even regulate the tide<sup>39</sup>. As Governor Dunmore of Virginia complained, "I have learned from experience that the established Authority of any government in America, and the policy of Government at home, are both insufficient to restrain the Americans; and that they do and will remove as their avidity and restlessness incite them."<sup>40</sup>

Efforts at restraint, in fact, helped fuel the upsurge of revolutionary sentiments that exploded in 1775-1776 and ended London's formal control over the Appalachian

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These issues are discussed in Ronald Hyam, "Imperial Interests and the Peace of Paris (1763)," in Ronald Hyam and Ged W. Martin, Reappraisals in British Imperial History (London: Macmillan; 1975), pp. 21-43; Gregory Evans Dowd, War Under Heaven: Pontiac, the Indian Nations and the British Empire (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 2002); R. Douglas Hurt, The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 1996), pp. 45-55; and C.G. Calloway, The Scratch of a Pen, pp. 66-100.

38

Hilda Neatby, The Quebec Act: Protest and Policy (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall of Canada; 1972), pp. 47-49. This act placed most of British Transappalachia under the jurisdiction of the Province of Quebec.

39

Richard B. Drake, A History of Appalachia (Louisville, KY: University of Kentucky; 2001), pp. 46-50; R.D. Hurt's The Ohio Frontier, pp. 55-63, and his The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846 (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico; 2002), pp.10-21. Also see Bernard Bailyn's major study on colonial migrations, Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution (New York: Alfred A Knopf; 1986), especially chapters 14-16.

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Quoted in A.T. Volwiler, George Croghan and the Westward Movement, pp. 211-212.

“backcountry” and trans-Appalachian “backwoods” settlers with their independent “Cohee” culture. The range of often interchangeable terms applied to such regions is illustrated by a letter from George Washington to the Board of War in May 1778 “on the subject of the Indian ravages upon the Western Frontier.” Earlier, writes Washington,

...I had to put that part of the 13<sup>th</sup> Virginia Regt., which remained here under marching orders, with the intent of sending them to Fort Pitt, as they were raised in that Country. Immediately upon receiving the account of the alarming situation of the Frontier inhabitants from you, I ordered the 8<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Regt. To march. They were also raised to the Westward and are a choice Body of Men about one hundred of them have been constantly in Morgans Rifle Corps. These two Regiments will march full the number of 250 men from hence. There are upwards of one hundred of the 13<sup>th</sup> Virginia now at or near Fort Pitt, and many deserters belonging to both will come in, when they find their Regiments are to do duty in that Country. As Colo. Russell of the 13<sup>th</sup> Virginia Regt. is already at Fort Pitt and Colo. Brodhead commands and goes up with the 8<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania, it was impossible to give the command of the detachments to Lieut Colo. Butler. Indeed, he does not seem to wish to go upon the expedition, as he says his influence is not so great among the inhabitants of the back Country as the Board imagine. From his knowledge of the Indian Country, their language and manners, he certainly would be very useful and I shall therefore either send him or Colo. John Gibson up, who I am informed can render equal service. ... If the two Regiments to be raised upon the Frontiers are not disposed of, I would recommend Colo. Crawford to the command of one of them. I know him to be a brave and active officer and of considerable influence upon the Western Frontier of Virginia....<sup>41</sup>

And such more centrally organized efforts aside, in practice stockaded “frontier stations” again had of necessity reappeared as sanctuaries for beleaguered pioneers on the Allegheny Plateau and elsewhere during the American Revolution.<sup>42</sup>

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George Washington, Writings, 39 vols., ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), 11: March-May 1778, pp. 439-441.

42

F. Merk, History of the Westward Movement, pp. 87-88. For further details on the period before 1783 see Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (New York: Cambridge University; 1991); Colin G. Calloway, The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities (New York: Cambridge University; 1995);

Not surprisingly, the term “frontier” gained a still more specifically political-military connotation after 1783 when the young American Republic’s new Federal Government had to assume directly the burden of establishing its still ill-defined frontiers or borders in all these areas. To the north and south-southwest this meant seeking a boundary demarcation through negotiations with other established governments -- those of the remaining colonial powers, Britain and Spain.<sup>43</sup> This process involved numerous difficulties and even confrontations that threatened to erupt in open hostilities. One such was that with Spain on the Sabine River in 1805-1806, which became intertwined with the plotting of Aaron Burr and his fellow conspirators.<sup>44</sup> But these threats paled beside those entailed in establishing a border in

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Barbara Graymount, The Iroquois in the American Revolution (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University; 1972); and Alan Taylor, The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 2006). The frontier forts are described and often illustrated in J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 39-94, and individual border campaigns in Gavin K. Watt’s (with James F. Morrison) The Burning of the Valleys: Daring Raids from Canada against the New York Frontier in the Fall of 1780 (1997) and Rebellion in the Mohawk Valley: The St. Leger Expedition of 1777 (2002), both published by the Dundurn Group of Toronto.

43

The problems of defining North American frontier-borders both before and after the Revolution, as well as of surveying the new lands and finding a suitable scale of measurements, was recently reviewed in detail in Andro Linklater, Measuring America: How an Untamed Wilderness Shaped the United States and Fulfilled the Promise of Democracy (New York: Walker and Company; 2002), and in William H. Goetzmann, Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientists in the Winning of the American West, new ed. (New York: History Book Club; 2006), pp. 3-30, and especially the map on p. 17, as well as the maps in P.E. Cohen, Mapping the West, pp. 78-93.

44

Theodore J. Crackel, Mr. Jefferson’s Army: Political and Social Reform of the Military Establishment, 1801-1809 (New York: New York University; 1987), pp. 124-157.

the northwest and west. By the Peace of Paris of 1783 Britain had assigned her former colonies “spacious boundaries” beyond the Appalachians, “but American sovereignty within the boundaries was largely a legal fiction.”<sup>45</sup> To begin with, there were still only some 25,000 settlers living between that range and the Mississippi, and even the loyalty of these “backwoodsmen” was sometimes questionable.<sup>46</sup> Secondly, the problems of controlling these often unruly pioneer enclaves aside, Congress also faced a barrier to its authority from the native Indian nations with their differing cultural practices and memories of a century of past hostilities.<sup>47</sup>

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Julius W. Pratt, A History of United States Foreign Policy (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; 1961), p. 57. Major aspects of these issues are examined in detail by Jon Kukla, A Wilderness So Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 2003),

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R.B. Drake, History of Appalachia, pp. 59-67. This problem came to a head in 1791 when gangs of settlers along the headwaters of the Ohio River attacked the Federal officials charged with levying a tax on spirits; see Thomas P. Slaughter, Whisky Rebellion: Frontier Epilogue to the American Revolution (New York: Oxford University; 1986), and William Hogeland, The Whiskey Rebellion: George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and the Frontier Rebels Who Challenged America's Newfound Sovereignty (New York: Lisa Drew-Scribner; 2006). Another interesting attempt of these early frontiersmen to establish their own political identity is described in Samuel Cole Williams, History of the Lost State of Franklin, rev. ed. (1933. Reprint: Johnson City, TN: Overmountain Press; 1993).

47

Prominent studies of these issues include Colin G. Calloway, One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska; 2003) and The Shawnees and the War for America (New York: Penguin-Viking Library of American Indian History; 2007). Other useful studies include Celia Barnes, Native American Power in the United States, 1783-1795 (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh-Dickinson University; 2003), and Stephen Warren, The Shawnees and Their Neighbors, 1795-1870 (Urbana, IL, and Chicago: University of Illinois; 2005), chapter one. American-Amerindian relations in the southern borderlands are covered in William S. Coker and Thomas D. Watson, Indian Traders of the Southeastern Borderlands: Pantan, Leslie & Company and John Forbes & Company, 1783-1847 (Pensacola, FL:

Concern for the defence of the western borders or “frontier” continued unabated even after the conclusion of a formal peace in 1783. In that year George Washington recommended to Congress that the new nation’s peacetime military establishment include: “A regular and standing force, for Garrisoning West Point and such other Posts upon our Northern, Western and Southern Frontiers, as shall be deemed necessary to awe the Indians, protect our Trade, prevent the encroachment of our Neighbours of Canada and the Florida’s; and guard us at least from surprizes.”<sup>48</sup> In this manner Washington was recommending the creation of a traditional, fortified military frontier, established at least as much for the political purpose of asserting sovereignty as defending an advancing line of settlers. While far from blind to this last imperative, Washington resembled many European and colonial American military planners before

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University of West Florida; 1986); Benjamin W. Griffith, Jr., McIntosh and Weatherford: Creek Indian Leaders (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama; 1988); Frank Lawrence Owsley, Jr., Struggle for the Gulf Borderlands: The Creek War and the Battle of New Orleans, 1812-1815 (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida; 1981), esp. pp. 18-29; Joel W. Martin, Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees’ Struggle for a New World (Boston: Beacon Press; 1991); Claudio Saunt, A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733-1816 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1999); and Gregory A. Waselkov, A Conquering Spirit: Fort Mims and the Redstick War of 1813-1814 (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama; 2006). Americans’ attitudes of the day are critically reviewed in Anthony F.C. Wallace, Jefferson and the Indians: The Tragic Fate of the First Americans (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 1999)

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“Washington Recommends a Permanent Military Establishment,” in Walter Millis, ed., American Military Thought (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill; 1966), p. 17. In the body of his memorandum Washington also points to the need for coastal fortifications as well, but warned of rumours that the British force already in Canada was to be reinforced; “that the frontier is very extensive;” and that “the Tribes of Indians within our Territories are numerous, soured and jealous;” and that it was imperative to maintain communications “with the exterior Posts;” (Ibid., pp. 18-19).



him in that he regarded settlers as a means of serving his frontier rather than vice versa. In another proposal to Congress, again made in 1783, he reminded its members that the increasingly frustrated men of his victorious Continental Army had been promised “bounty land” in return for their service. He now proposed that if possible, such grants be made a “district of unsettled Country” in the West which given “its local position and peculiar advantages ought to be first settled in preference to any other.” Furthermore, Washington argued that he was

perfectly convinced that it cannot be so advantageously settled , by any other Class of Men as by the disbanded Officers and Men of the Army – to whom the faith of the Government hath long since been pledged, that lands should be granted at the expiration of the War, in certain proportions, agreeably to their respective grades.

I am induced to give my sentiments thus freely on the advantages to be expected from this plan of Colonization – because it would connect our Government with the frontiers – extend our Settlements progressively – and plant a brave, a hardy & respectable Race of People, as our advanced Post, who would always be ready & willing (in case of hostility) to combat the Savages, and check their incursions – a Settlement formed by such Men would give security to our frontiers – the very name of it would awe the Indians, and more than probably prevent the murder of many innocent Families, which frequently, in the usual mode of extending our Settlements & Encroachments on the hunting grounds of the Natives, fall the hapless Victims to savage barbarity.....

Other advantages he foresaw included the promotion of “the Peltry Trade” and the likelihood that when the Amerindian found “so formidable a Settlement in the vicinity of their Towns,” they would be more likely to sell the lands they occupied “upon equitable terms,” and so “to relinquish our [Sic!] Territories, and to remove into the illimitable regions of the West.” And he added that the Congressmen also should consider “the barrier” that the settlement of trained soldiers “would form against our other

Neighbours.”<sup>49</sup>

Although never realized, this proposal speaks volumes about the understanding of “frontiers” shared by Washington and his fellows: they marked the edge of political sovereignty, not settlement, and while intended to protect settlers, these last were in their turn to serve the same goal of maintaining the national interest. Furthermore, despite his sympathy for settler-victims, the Virginian general-gentleman was also irritated by the unruly and provocative (to the existing aboriginal inhabitants) manner in which they advanced into the interior. As a result, his proposed military frontier – like that of his fellow Virginians eight decades earlier – was comprised of both forts and military colonists. Apart from removing existing causes of native-colonist conflict, it similarly sought to prevent future problems by permitting the government to control, if not constrain, the Westward Movement. Otherwise, the military settlers aside, Washington’s proposal for forts with permanent garrisons had considerable resonance in the ongoing debates over the new nation’s future form that raged during the 1780s. Thus Alexander Hamilton, who had requested the above quoted general’s views on a future military establishment, echoed his concerns. Hamilton, too, noted that since the war, as before the revolution, “there has been a constant necessity for keeping small garrisons upon our Western frontier,” and he argued “that these will continue to be indispensable, if it

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George Washington to Elias Boudinot, Headquarters, Newburgh, 17 June, 1783,” George Washington, The Glorious Struggle: George Washington’s Revolutionary War Letters, edited Edward G. Lengel, preface Joseph J. Ellis (New York: Collins-Smithsonian Books; 2007), pp. 278-279.

should only be against the ravages or depredations of the Indians”<sup>50</sup> -- a danger that became acute both in the early 1790s, and again after a new war broke out with Great Britain in 1812.<sup>51</sup> From the first, in fact, the republic’s relations with the Amerindians had been complicated by the backing, and often outright encouragement to resist American encroachments, the aboriginal nations received from British military posts on the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain, and from Spanish forts along the central and southern Mississippi.<sup>52</sup> Or as Hamilton had put it in the latter 1780s, the “territories of Britain, Spain, and of the Indian nations in our neighborhood ... encircle the Union from Maine to Georgia,” so that framers of the new constitution had to assume that “Indian

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Alexander Hamilton, “Letter 24,” The Federalist Papers, ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York: New American Library-Mentor Books; 1961), p. 161. A recent assessment of the state of native opposition at this time is provided by R.D. Hurt, The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846, chapter 5, while a feeling for contemporary attitudes on all sides can be gained from E. Foster, ed., The Ohio Frontier, pp. 68-138.

51

The military frontier between 1783 and 1815 is described in J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 133-174; Richard H. Kohn, Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802 (New York: The Free Press; 1975), and Francis Paul Prucha, The Sword of the Republic: The United States Army on the Frontier, 1783-1846 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska; 1969), chapters 1-6. The United States Army’s role in the exploring of the West and opening the routes for settlers is chronicled in William H. Goetzmann, Army Exploration in the American West, 1803-1863 (Austin, TX: Texas State Historical Association; 1991).

52

Apart from many of the works mentioned above, this aspect of the problems facing the young republic is reviewed in detail in R. David Edmunds, Tecumseh and the Quest for Indian Leadership (Boston: Little, Brown; 1984), and Colin G. Calloway, Crown and Calumet: British-Indian Relations, 1783-1815 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 1987)..

hostilities, instigated by Spain or Britain, would always be at hand.”<sup>53</sup>

All of this meant that if the United States was to exert sovereignty effectively within its allotted boundaries, it had to resolve three interrelated issues: to convince Britain and Spain to abide by the Treaty of Paris; to obtain the secure allegiance of the pioneers already settled beyond the mountains; and to gain control over the Indian nations and their lands.<sup>54</sup> This last task was made difficult, however, by growing pressures to resume the westward movement of settlement since the new Federal Government had to protect what became a continuous wave of pioneers while simultaneously attempting to maintain peaceful relations with the Indians, whose lands these same settlers coveted.<sup>55</sup> As Washington’s and Hamilton’s comments suggest, many leading Americans had quickly realized that any hope of achieving these goals lay in following the examples their predecessors in establishing a permanently garrisoned frontier zone by building their own chains of forts and outposts, and this despite their citizens’ prejudice against a

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“Letter 25,” Federalist Papers, pp. 163, 165. On this issue also see the recent discussion in Joseph J. Ellis, American Creation: Triumphs and Tragedies at the Founding of the First Republic (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 2007), pp. 130-164.

54

J.W. Pratt, A History of United States Foreign Policy, p. 58.

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In advocating a strong federal authority, the American statesman John Jay observed, “there are several instances of Indian hostilities having been provoked by the improper conduct of individual States, who, either unable or unwilling to restrain or punish offenses, have given occasion to the slaughter of many innocent inhabitants;” “Letter No. 3,” Federalist Papers, p. 44. Unfortunately, given the difficulties involved, the Federal government’s record in this regard was not much better; on this issue of accommodating possible Indian rights, see Russel Lawrence Barsh and James Youngblood Henderson, The Road: Indian Tribes and Political Liberty Berkeley, CA: University of California; 1980), pp.20-27, 31-49.

standing army.<sup>56</sup> Small wonder, then, that Francis Prucha concludes that the American “regular army ... owed its existence to the American frontier.”<sup>57</sup> Yet this said, we should stress that at the time and later, the term “frontier” retained its military-defensive character, and this despite American expansionism. Meanwhile, thanks to the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the young American Republic gained “a wilderness so immense that its boundaries remained indefinite for years”<sup>58</sup> and in 1804, Jefferson sought to reinforce this claim by dispatching Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark with “the Corps of Discovery” (not “of the Frontier”) to explore this acquisition.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, some forty years later, the mountain-man Kit Carson and soldier-explorer John Charles Fremont led

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Along with other titles already mentioned, this issue is discussed in detail in Marcus Cunliffe, Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865 (Boston: Little, Brown; 1968), esp. 29-144, and most recently, in Saul Cornell, A Well Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America (Oxford: Oxford University; 2006), pp. 9-106.

57

F.P. Prucha, Sword of the Republic, p. 1.

58

Jon Kukla, A Wilderness So Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 2003), p. 7. For other recent interpretations of this event see Roger G. Kennedy, Mr. Jefferson's Lost Cause: Land, Slavery and the Louisiana Purchase (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press; 2003), and the discussion in A. Linklater, Measuring America, pp. 156-159.

59

See, for example, John Bakeless, ed. and intro. The Journals of Lewis and Clark: A New Selection (New York: Mentor Books; 1964), This expedition is discussed in Stephen E. Ambrose, Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West (New York: Simon and Schuster; 1996), and Alvin M. Josephy, Jr., with Marc Jaffe, Lewis and Clark through Indian Eyes (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006).

the “Army of the West” on its mission to open the Santa Fe Trail to California.<sup>60</sup> And overall, it was the term “the West” that replaced “the Wilderness,” and still not “the Frontier.”<sup>61</sup>

Nonetheless, over the next century the United States Army found itself maintaining a military frontier that by 1818 stretched from the Great Lakes southward along the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.<sup>62</sup> Thereafter it slowly moved, or was pulled, westward to protect the Anglo-American migrants of the Westward Movement, and attempting simultaneously to preserve the rights of the natives.<sup>63</sup> The latter’s rights were enshrined in a series of increasingly harsh treaties which deprived them of their ancestral lands. And just as frequently, these same treaties were once again ignored and

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Hampton Sides, Blood and Thunder: An Epic of the American West (New York: Doubleday; 2006).

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Another prominent example of the “non-use” of “frontier” is Washington Irving, The Adventures of Captain Bonneville, digested from his journals (Washington, DC: National Geographic; 2003).

62

See the map “The Military Frontier, 1785-1818,” in R.D. Hurt, The Indian Frontier, 1763-1846, p. 107.

63

The progress of the Westward Movement and associated frontier can be followed by means of the excellent set of maps collected in P.E. Cohen, Mapping the West, and by F.P. Prucha’s accounts of “Army Territorial Commands” and “Forts,” in H.R. Lamar, The Reader’s Encyclopedia of the American West, pp. 52-55 and pp. 392-396. More general treatments include Rodman W. Paul, The Far West and the Great Plains in Transition (New York: Harper and Row; 1988); Clyde A. Milner II, Carola O’Conner and Martha A. Sandweiss, eds., The Oxford History of the American West (New York: Oxford University; 1994), pp. 115-425; and D.W. Meinig, The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective of 500 Years of History, ii: Continental America, 1800-1867 (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1993). In “Forts on the Plains” John Keegan (Warpaths, pp. 265-335), also discusses the military frontier

violated by the waves of traders, miners, cowmen and farmers, who then insisted that Washington negotiate some new agreement.<sup>64</sup> In the interim the Army, even after it lost control of the Bureau of Indian Affairs to the Interior Department in 1849, had primary responsibility for “damage control.” When these efforts failed, as they frequently did, the soldiers then were charged with punishing the disillusioned and increasingly desperate natives.<sup>65</sup> So despite the efforts of Secretaries of War John C. Calhoun (1817-1825) and Lewis Cass (in 1836)<sup>66</sup> to impose plans for a unified system of frontier roads and forts, as often as not these frontier components arose in an ad hoc manner, in response to the ebb and flow of the Westward Movement and the associated native resistance.<sup>67</sup> Having pushed across the Great Plains in the 1870s and smashed the last vestiges of Indian resistance in the 1880s, by the century’s end the United States Army found itself forced to search for a new mission.<sup>68</sup>

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The continuing series of Indian defeats are chronicled in James Wilson, The Earth Shall Weep: A History of Native America (New York: Grove Press; 1998), chapters 5-9.

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For brief surveys of the roles of the bureau and the army, see P. Richard Metcalf, “Indian Affairs, Bureau of,” and F.P. Prucha, “Army on the Frontier,” in H.R. Lamar, The Reader’s Encyclopedia of the American West, pp. 539-541 and pp. 49-52, as well as Prucha’s full-scale study The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians, abridged ed. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska; 1986).

66

F.P. Prucha, Sword of the Republic, pp. 136-137, 340-342.

67

Robert A. Murray, The Army Moves West: Supplying The Western Indian Wars Campaigns, Illus. (Fort Collins, CO: Old Army Press; 1981), provides brief insights into solving the logistical problems involved in this process.

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Russell F. Weigley, “The Long Death of the Indian-Fighting Army,” in Garry D. Ryan and Timothy K. Nenninger, eds., Soldiers and Civilians: The U.S. Army and the

### **The Turner Frontier Synthesis**

As the above brief account suggests, throughout American history before 1870 the term “frontier” usually had a military implication, be it explicit or implicit. This is because the problems of defending both British colonial and the American Republic’s borders had meant that the “military frontier” of necessity gradually moved westward to parallel the tide of settlement. Indeed, Frederick Jackson Turner revealed his genius, which was perhaps as poetic as it was scholarly,<sup>69</sup> by creating his ideal frontier through merging the “Westward Movement” of settlers with the advance of a traditional military frontier, and doing so in accord with a number of other intellectual trends of his day. As Robert Berkhofer points out, Turner was not the first to portray European settlement “as a series of repetitive sequences.” His contribution, rather, was to combine “the sequential and the aggregative meanings of process so well in his frontier interpretation of the American past” that the Westward Movement seemingly explained and described “all the virtues which nineteenth-century Americans prided themselves on possessing in contrast to

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American People (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration; 1987), pp. 27-39. It is worth noting that the role of the US Army in many ways paralleled that of the Muscovite and Imperial Russian army during that nation’s expansion southward before 1800; see Michael Khodarkovsky, Russia’s Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 2002).

<sup>69</sup>

As one critic observed, the “frontier was, first of all, a poetically charged image;” William Coleman, “Science and Symbol in the Turner Frontier Thesis,” American Historical Review, 72 (October 1966), No. 1, p. 23. He points out that Turner himself was fascinated with poetry and lamented the lack of a poet suitable to his own “magnificent” era in which science had, in Coleman’s words, “rediscovered the world and found there new meaning.” Or as Turner himself had put it in 1883: “Nature is calling for her poet;” Ibid., pp. 27-28.



other peoples.” By means of this recurring process, Berkhofer explains, Turner delineated an “advancing frontier zone, and the cumulative sequences in turn produced the frontier as an analytical concept for him.” By stressing “sequence in any one area over time,” he “fused time and space in his interpretation.” Consequently, Berkhofer concludes, the Turner frontier’s power as “an interpretative concept in American history ... rested, in reality, upon Turner's poetic fusion of the several meanings of process into a single overall continuum for the American experience.”<sup>70</sup>

Thanks to Turner, Berkhofer concludes, the “word frontier in American understanding denotes both a series of recurring sequences of white settlement as the English and the Americans advanced into the interior of what is now the United States,” as well as “the overall results of those sequences for comprehending the impact of the frontier upon American life and history in general.”<sup>71</sup> Ignoring the historical developments outlined above, Turner himself was explicit in insisting that his American frontier was “sharply distinguished from the European frontier -- a fortified boundary line running through dense populations.” He believed that it was necessary to discard the traditional political-military models since in the New World, “the frontier is the outer

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Berkhofer points out that like the word “frontier,” “process” is ambiguous when used in American English. But he insists that “frontier” depends for its most important historical meaning and imaginative connotation upon the several meanings of process.” He defines these as “any set of changes that in aggregate lead to some end,” but also as “a single sequence in a set or series of recurring sequences,” which “therefore may also designate the cumulative effects of such a series of recurring sequences;” Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., “The North American Frontier as Process and Context,” in Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, eds., The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1981), pp. 43-44.

<sup>71</sup>

Ibid.

edge of the wave” that had reached “the hither edge of free land,” a concept he borrowed from the Italian economist Achille Loria.<sup>72</sup> Although census reports treated it “as the margin of that settlement which has a density of two or more [people] to the square mile,” Turner argued that the “term is an elastic one” that “for our purpose does not need sharp definition,” but that he took the frontier to comprise “the whole frontier belt, including the Indian territory and the outer margin of the ‘settled area’ of the census reports.”<sup>73</sup>

Otherwise, at times Turner also conceived of his frontier in terms of a geological metaphor

in that it left “successive terminal moraines” like those resulting from “successive glaciations.” Identifying a series of “successive frontiers,” he claimed that

we find natural boundary lines which have served to mark and affect the characteristics of the frontiers, namely: the ‘fall-line’; the Allegheny Mountains; the Mississippi; the Missouri where its direction approximates north-south; the line of the arid plains, approximately the ninety-ninth meridian; and the Rocky Mountains. The fall line marked the frontier of the seventeenth century; and the Alleghenies that of the eighteenth; the Mississippi that of the first quarter of the nineteenth; the Missouri that of the middle of this century (omitting the Californian movement); and the belt of the Rocky Mountains and arid tract, the present frontier. Each was won by a

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Loria had written on the positive impact of the availability of “free” land on a national economy. The intellectual influences on Turner are examined in Ray Allen Billington, The Genesis of the Frontier Thesis: A Study in Historical Creativity (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library; 1971); Lee Benson, “The Historical Background of Turner's Frontier Essay,” Agricultural History, 25 (April 1951), 59-82; and Herman C. Nixon, “Precursors of Turner in the Interpretation of the American Frontier,” South Atlantic Quarterly, 28 (January 1929), 83-98.

<sup>73</sup>

F.J. Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” p. 10.

series of Indian wars.<sup>74</sup>

Standing at the Cumberland Gap, he insists, we “watch the procession of civilization, marching single file -- the buffalo following the trail to the salt springs, the Indian, the fur-trader and hunter, the cattle-raiser, the pioneer farmer -- and the frontier has passed by.” Each was impelled by an irresistible attraction,” he tells us, and each “passed in successive waves across the continent” forming frontiers which have their own “natural boundary lines.” But more important still for Turner was his belief that each of these frontiers “leaves its trace behind it, and when it becomes a settled area the region still partakes of the frontier characteristics,” thus forming a unique American character.<sup>75</sup>

#### **The Backcountry and “Frontiersmen” before Turner**

Perhaps so ... but before discussing Turner further and taking his conclusion as a given, the recorded characteristics of the American pioneer, and the use of the terms “frontier” and “frontiersman” before Turner, deserve further attention. Earlier we noted the division that developed between the older coastal or “tidewater” settlements and the first Appalachian and trans-Appalachian “backcountry” pioneers with their own “Cohee” culture,<sup>76</sup> as well as the importance of these “backwoodsmen” to the development of the

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<sup>74</sup>

Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>75</sup>

Ibid., pp. 12, 9, 4.

<sup>76</sup>

During the early federal period “Cohee” was the name adopted by backcountry people in Maryland, Virginia and the Carolinas to distinguish themselves from Tidewater inhabitants in general, and the landed, slave-owning elite in particular. In Virginia they referred to these last as “Tuckahoes,” a name derived from a large Randolph-family plantation; R.B. Drake, History of Appalachia, pp. 68-69.

great Westward Movement that carried the United States to the Pacific. Some see this phenomenon as beginning in 1635-1636 when Thomas Hooker led his flock from Newtown, Massachusetts, westwards to find new homes in Connecticut because, other reasons aside, of “the strong bent of their spirits to remove thither.”<sup>77</sup> While this conclusion may be somewhat fanciful – the Reverend Hooker and his followers had no idea they were starting a movement that would span the continent – the symbolism remains. For example, in discussing that region Turner argued that in the wake of the fur traders and other such “frontier types,” it was not colonial governments, but the “settler on the outskirts of Puritan civilization [who] took up the task of bearing the brunt of [Amerindian] attack and pushing forward the line of advance which year after year carried American settlements into the wilderness.” Through this process, he argues, the “new exposed areas between the settlements on one side and the Indians ... on the other” were absorbed by the colonists, and by c. 1690 “the military frontier ceased to be thought of as the Atlantic coast, but rather as a moving line bounding the un-won wilderness.” He further insists virtually the same process occurred in Virginia and indeed, all along the Atlantic seaboard, and so the “frontier” ended by defending “the outer edge of this expanding society, a changing frontier....” which became known simply as “the West.”<sup>78</sup>

Before investigating the reality of Turner’s conception of frontiersman, one

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Quoted in Marshal B. Davidson, Life in America, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin-Riverside Press; 1951), i, p. 157. On this case, also see Samuel Eliot Morison, Builders of the Bay Colony (Boston: Houghton Mifflin-Riverside Press; 1930, 1958), pp. 95-97, and more recently, Alison Games, Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 1999), pp. 171-173.

<sup>78</sup>

F.J. Turner, “The First Official Frontier of the Massachusetts Bay,” pp. 41-45.

additional issue deserves attention. As the ongoing debates considered below indicate, his insights and attempt to transform the “military frontier” into his “settlement frontier” are not without their merits. Even so, we have seen that governments were hardly as passive as Turner sometimes seems to suggest, and in colonies such as Virginia, “military frontiers” often represented the authorities’ determination to control expansion, not to defend those pushing into the “new exposed areas” of a native-colonist borderland. Similarly, the Anglo-American “frontier towns,” the essential institution of Turner’s presumed merger of colonization with military necessity, were a product of official policy to find a cost-efficient alternative to the expense of supporting a more traditional fortified line, the type of frontier used by France to protect its commercial empire in the North American interior. At the same time, over time the expansion of settlers did indeed frequently drag the “military frontier” westward in its wake, and it is therefore worth looking at contemporary views of the process of the settling of what was known as “the backcountry,” a process which parallels in time Turner’s account of the creation of the first colonial frontiers in Massachusetts, Virginia and elsewhere. Or put differently, as a typical recent study explains, it is the story of the “backcountry” that “shifts ever westward from the Atlantic shore to the Mississippi River.”<sup>79</sup> Or, rather, it was the ongoing process of settlers pushing beyond the original borders of the coastal colonies into a series of “backcountries” like Virginia’s Piedmont and Appalachia, or first Connecticut, and then New Hampshire and Maine, that created the American Westward Movement, and the more formal military-political frontiers were dragged

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E. Hinderaker and P.C. Mancall, At the Edge of Empire, p. 7.

sometimes kicking and screaming, in the pioneers' wake.<sup>80</sup>

According to the study just mentioned, the "backcountry" narrative begins with the landing of colonists at various points along the Atlantic coast, when initially, "the backcountry was Indian country." Throughout the 1600s, its authors continue, "[c]olonists and Indians came together in the near hinterland of the English colonies for a variety of purposes," commerce, exchanges of religious ideas, the formation of alliances and waging of wars included. Yet from the first, such "contacts alternated between accommodation and violence, peace and war," with hostilities occurring more frequently with the movement of colonists inland from the coast to settle on new territories in the interior – the former "Indian country." If both sides again pursued contact and exchange, they met on unequal terms since the diseases brought from Europe triggered "a Native American population decline so severe that it devastated communities and transformed Native societies and culture." Although Amerindians remained, "backcountry" demography changed as the numbers of colonists grew, and when their rate of increase accelerated in the first half the 1700s, the daily life of those living in British America's hinterland was reshaped as native polities lost out to larger

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Although this distinction between "backcountry" and "frontier" may appear artificial or to be mere semantic quibbling, I would argue that by restricting these terms to their usage before Turner, we avoid dealing with the otherwise unavoidable baggage of the overarching, often deterministic and usually debatable implications of his theoretical conclusions. Thus the authors of the study just quoted insist that the "English experience with a backcountry began with the medieval Anglo-Norman expansion into Wales, Scotland, and then Ireland, where the English authorities and settlers repeatedly encountered native populations resistant to native rule;" *Ibid.*, p. 4. Whatever one makes of this approach, it certainly differs considerably from Turner's view of the frontier experience as being uniquely American..

communities of settlers. Early in that century, newly arrived immigrants “took up new lands with alarming speed, often before colonial officials could organize their sale.” Consequently, by the 1750s “Britain’s backcountry stretched across a broad inland arc from Maine and New Hampshire to New York, across western Maryland, Maryland, and Virginia, and through the Carolinas as far south as Georgia.” Parallel with this geographical extension, the narrative continues, the “backcountry of cross-cultural encounter expanded as well” as the Amerindians traded furs and deerskins with the colonists for European goods “across vast expanses of the continental interior” while diplomats from both sides “built complex communication networks to ameliorate conflicts.” When diplomacy failed, earlier localized conflicts erupted, often escalated and spread, but by mid-century -- as in the Acadian borderland during the 1680s-1690s -- they were complicated further by imperial rivalries and European wars. These peaked in the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763) and after Britain’s victory, “vast new lands opened novel possibilities for territorial expansion and development, but also brought administrative challenges on an unprecedented scale.” As a result, “Britain’s American empire eventually collapsed under the weight of a backcountry grown too large and complicated to administer or control.”<sup>81</sup>

Now to return to Turner.... Since he found his “first official frontier” in the contracting line of fortified settlements in northeastern New England during 1689-1690,

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Ibid., pp. 4-5. Hinderacker and Mancall also point out (p.7) that until “recently,” historians viewed these events “from the perspective of the colonists only,” and regarded them as “the conflict between European civilization and Native American savagery, ... of good over evil” which, although they do not say so explicitly, is especially true of Turner. Also see M.C. Ward, Breaking the Backcountry, pp. 1-24.

it is no surprise that he saw their inhabitants as prototypes of the later heroic, if often mythical, frontiersmen who, he argues, were the instruments of America's national destiny. "Forced together into houses for protection," he writes, "getting in their crops at the peril of their lives,... they helped to protect the exposed frontier."<sup>82</sup> But against the heroic image of Turner and others, we must set the already mentioned fact that such service was far from universally popular, and stress that the very laws establishing "frontier towns" felt it necessary to impose severe penalties on those who took "French leave" and abandoned their posts. Indeed, Turner himself notes that accounts of these towns reveal an ongoing "spirit of military insubordination," and cites a report of 1694 on the decaying fortifications at Hatfield Hadley and Springfield. In reference to this problem the report's writer found "the people a little wilful. Inclined to doe when and how they please or not at all.." Another correspondent from Haverhill complains that "I have laboured in vain: some go this, and that, and the other way at pleasure, and do what they list."<sup>83</sup>

That such attitudes, along with other typical aspects of life in frontier towns, continued on into next century, is evident from a petition sent to the Massachusetts Court from Groton in 1704:

1. That wharas by the all dessoising hand of god who orders all things in infinit wisdom it is our portion to liue [live] In such a part of the land which by reson of the enemy Is becom vary dangras as by wofull experiants we haue falt both formarly and of late to our grat damidg & discoridgment and espashaly this last yere hauing lost so many parsons som killed som

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<sup>82</sup>

F.J. Turner, "The First Official Frontier of the Massachusetts Bay," pp. 50-51.

<sup>83</sup>

Ibid., p. 51.



captauated and som remoued [removed] and allso much corn & cattell and horses & hay wharby wee ar gratly Impouerrished and brought uary [very] low & in a uary pore capacity to subsist any longer....

Furthermore, the petitioners complained their pastor was incapable serving, that they therefore had been advised to hire another, but that

2.... we haue but litel laft to pay our seus with being so pore and few In numbr ather to town or cuntrey & we being a frantere town & lyable to danger there being no safty in going out nor coming in but for a long time we haue got our brad with the parel of our liues [lives] & allso brought uary low by so grat a charg of bilding garisons & fortifycations by ordur of authorety & thar is saural [several] of our Inhabitants ramoued [removed]out of town & others are prouiding to remoue , axcapt somthing be don for our Incoridgment for we are so few & so por that we canot pay two ministors nathar ar we wiling to liue without any we spand so much time in waching and warding that we can doe but litel els & truly we haue liued allmost 2 yers more like soulders than other wise & accapt your honars can find out some bater way for our safty and support we cannot uphold as a town ather by remitting our tax or tow allow pay for building the sauarell [several] forts alowed and ordered by athority....<sup>84</sup>

That garrison service in such conditions was unpopular is not surprising. After all, as historian Charles Clark observes, the “nature of Indian warfare, with its swift, silent attacks, its ambushcades, its disregard of age and sex, and its deliberate cruelties, must have promoted a special terror” among those forced to live in a state of near constant siege during 1689-1713, and in many cases even longer,<sup>85</sup> as is graphically evident in a petition just quoted from the citizens of Groton in 1704. To reinforce this point, he cites the case of the commander and fifteen-man garrison at Wells who, in the spring of 1692, were forced to watch helplessly from their garrison while just beyond musket range, “a

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<sup>84</sup>

As quoted in F.J. Turner, “The First Official Frontier of the Massachusetts Bay,” pp. 48-50.

<sup>85</sup>

C.E. Clark, The Eastern Frontier, p. 70.

band of Indians disposed hideously of an English prisoner named James Diamond” by stripping and castrating him. They then sliced the skin between his toes and fingers, opened other gashes over the rest of his body, “into which they thrust firebrands, and left him, blazing and bleeding, to die. If their reactions can only be imagined, it seems obvious that those who lost wives, children or other kin during the Abenaki raids commonly nourished a spirit of murderous revenge for the rest of their lives.” If today we are still attempting to assess the affects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on our own professional soldiers, one can hardly but agree with Clark that the “social and psychological effects of the wars upon the settlers of the northern communities that remained intact ... are incalculable,” quite apart from the fact that the nature of these conflicts must have “inspired a special hatred of the natives.”<sup>86</sup>

Throughout the period of the Indian wars, Clark points out, the inhabitants of frontier towns sought as much as possible to maintain a normal community life as well as their defenses, and he cites correspondence between towns in Maine with the Massachusetts authorities as reflecting “to a striking degree the concern for peopling the settlements with permanent inhabitants” well into the 1750s. Yet in times of crisis such normalcy was usually impossible. Then, having learned too well the devastating costs of ignoring the dangers posed by Amerindian raiders, settler families abandoned their farmhouses for the nearest garrison houses. There they lived with others within these

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86

C.E. Clark, *The Eastern Frontier*, pp. 69-71. He adds sensibly that this hatred was “matched only, perhaps, by the growing resentment of the red men themselves over the clearly unjust and ceaseless encroachments on their hunting grounds and way of life by people who, unlike the French, displayed little interest in their welfare.”

structures or, more often, in temporary huts outside the house itself but still inside the stockade. Usually commanded by their owners, these “garrisons” usually were defensible enough assuming vigilance precluded a surprise assault. But as the Groton petition demonstrates, there was nothing to defend the nearby countryside or preserve the farmers’ cabins from the enemy’s wrath. In such circumstances, work in the woods or fields was dangerous, even if those nearest the refuge were often sporadically worked by men and women in daylight. Yet able-bodied males were more commonly required for service as sentries, scouts and other duties in support of the five-to-ten-militiaman garrisons allocated by the provincial authorities to the more fortunate frontier towns. Consequently, many colonists did indeed find themselves living “more like soulders than other wise,” were forced to accept a massive disruption of their economic as well as social lives, and rapidly became impoverished. “Except for the few merchant-shipowners at Portsmouth and Kittery who prospered under wartime economic conditions,” Clark concludes that “northern New Englanders became very poor.”<sup>87</sup>

For Turner, reading backwards to find antecedents for his own ideal frontiersman, all the prototypes – trader, hunter, Indian-fighter, primitive farmer, and so on – can be found along New England’s frontiers of this time, as can evidence “of the transforming influence of the Indian frontier upon the Puritan type of English colonist.” In this last regard he points to the colonists use of friendly natives as scouts in mixed ranger units,

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<sup>87</sup>

Ibid. The very different economic state of the ports is described in William G. Saltonstall, Ports of Piscataqua: Soundings in the maritime history of the Portsmouth, N.H., Customs District from the days of Queen Elizabeth and the planting of Strawberry Banke to the times of Abraham Lincoln and the waning of the American Clipper (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 1941), pp. 14-24.

as Connecticut did in 1704, their adoption of certain Amerindian techniques like the five-hundred pairs of snowshoes and moccasins ordered in 1703-1704 by the Massachusetts General Court for use in specific counties “lying Frontier next to the Wilderness,” or offers of bounties for enemy scalps.<sup>88</sup> Within this context, he sees petitions like those quoted above not as evidence of disgust with the frontier life, or of “a degree of submission to authority unlike that of other frontiersmen.” Instead, Turner cites them as “complaints against taxation; demands for expenditures by the colony in their behalf; criticisms of absentee proprietors” who thus skipped their tax bills; combined with “intimations that they may be forced to abandon the frontier position so essential to the defense of the settled eastern country.”

Complaints of insubordination, meanwhile, are indicative of a spirit “characteristic of the frontier,” and so have “a familiar ring to the student of the frontier.” Even so, he simultaneously insists “that existence of a common dangers on the borders of settlement tended to consolidate not only the towns of Massachusetts into united action for defense, but also the various colonies.” Having disposed of such possible anomalies, he then feels free to declare that the “very essence of the American frontier” in general, and “one of the most significant things about New England’s frontier in these years” in particular, “is that it is the graphic line which records the expansive energies of the people behind it, and which by the law of its own being continually draws that advance after it to new conquests.” And equally important, he adds, thanks to the needs of the common defense, the frontier was an incentive to sectional combination then as it was to nationalism

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<sup>88</sup>

F.J. Turner, “The First Official Frontier of the Massachusetts Bay,” pp. 45-45.

afterward.”<sup>89</sup>

Even so, the evidence presented above, that drawn from Turner himself included, casts doubt on such conclusions – at least as far as early New England is concerned . He is correct, of course, in maintaining that Indian fighters like Church and his fellows adopted many of their opponents’ methods, and played a significant role in the founding of new towns.<sup>90</sup> Yet despite the attention lavished by later historians on the ranger tradition, the expansion of these frontiers was at least as guaranteed by the traditional methods of European warfare as by the activities of the home-grown rangers.<sup>91</sup> And in any case, of course, the employment of native mercenaries or the use of snowshoes and moccasins is hardly proof of a major shift in cultural values. Again, to view the complaints of frontier towns and settlers as merely an attempt to obtain tax relief or other political advantages, however justified and well-deserved these may have been, is to downplay the real miseries of frontier duty and life – miseries that go far to explain the desertion of such settlements by Turner’s “absentee” landowners, and this despite the provisions of the laws governing these towns. Furthermore, requests for tax relief and aid from the authorities did increase the settlers’ subordination and mean that “the influence of the General Court grew at the expense of town autonomy,” not vice versa.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>

Ibid., pp. 50-52.

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On the role that Indian fighters played in the founding of new towns in New England, see D. Jaffee, People of the Wachusett, pp. 73-100.

<sup>91</sup>

G. Chet, Conquering the American Wilderness, especially the discussion pp. 1-6

<sup>92</sup>

P. Haffenden, New England in the English Nation, p. 135.

Similarly, however much a “spirit of military insubordination” may or may not have been typical among later frontiersmen, in this case -- when it might well prove suicidal -- it seems just as likely to represent a lethargy and fatalism induced by PTSD reactions to the grim and uncertain conditions of these colonists’ lives. The same psychological reactions, along with the problems of finding pastors to minister (or better, control) life on the frontiers, likely helps explain what Clark coyly refers to as the “disruption of normal domestic life that resulted from garrison living,” and which “encouraged departures from ordinary social conduct, even by Maine standards.” In other words, he continues, at least some garrison houses became “happy, frolicking” places.<sup>93</sup> However much such an environment may resemble conditions found elsewhere at other times, the causes were not necessarily identical. And finally, if the French and Indian threat did on occasion provoke examples of inter-colonial cooperation, this was only achieved in a lasting form with the adopting of the Constitution of the United States in 1787-1788!<sup>94</sup>

Whatever one makes of Turner’s considerations, it is still clear that despite the earlier gradual expansion of English settlement both along the Atlantic seacoast and up the eastern Appalachian slopes before the 1750s, the migration westwards from that

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C.E. Clark, The Eastern Frontier, p. 70. In particular, he cites the case of Alice Metherell who shared a room in a garrison house in Wells with one John Thompson during the winter of 1695, and who bore him a child “of whom he was named father by the court.” Alice, he adds, was “a notorious tart who five years before had borne a child of ‘Black Will,’ one of the few slaves in the eastern parts.”

94

Brief introductions (with bibliographies) to these issues are provided by Lance Banning, “Revolution and Constitution, Era of,” and John P. Kaminski, “Constitution,” in Paul S. Boyer, ed., The Oxford Companion to United States History (Oxford: Oxford University; 2001), pp. 664-666, and 156-158, respectively.

range picked up significant momentum in the Northwest after the final French defeat in 1760-1763, and developed elsewhere over the next decade. “The yeoman ideal – the hope of having land of one’s own – ,” writes Richard Drake, “impelled most Appalachian settlers to take up mountain farms as soon as the region was reasonably secure from Indian attack,”<sup>95</sup> and in many cases even earlier. The Reverend Joseph Doddridge, for instance, recalled that in 1772 this surge initially “commenced along the Monongahela, and between that river and the Laurel Ridge, ... reached the Ohio river” in 1773, and which region was then claimed by both Virginia and Pennsylvania. To reach it, the “greater number of these first settlers” had crossed the mountains “from the upper parts of the then colonies of Maryland and Virginia” by using “Braddock’s Trail,” while others arrived by using the “military road” running from Pennsylvania to Pittsburg. In any case, his own father and neighbours had established their settlement in the spring of 1773. He insists that the motive driving “the greater number of these people to cross the mountains” was quite simply land, and sums this up by quoting the “saying” that “‘land was to be had here for the taking up’; that is, building a cabin and raising a crop of grain, however small, of any kind, entitled the occupant to four hundred acres of land, and a preemption right to one thousand acres more adjoining, to be secured by a land office warrant” or certificate issued by commissioners from Virginia.<sup>96</sup>

Regardless of an individual migrant’s particular mix of motives, a general “restless” spirit evident in Thomas Hooker’s migrating Pilgrims of 1636 continued to be clearly

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<sup>95</sup>

R.B. Drake, A History of Appalachia, p. 60.

<sup>96</sup>

J. Doddridge, Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars, pp. 80-83.

evident throughout the Westward Movement. In remarking on the English authorities' failure to stem the Americans' westward migration, Governor Lord John Dunmore of Virginia saw "restlessness" vying with "avidity" as the major explanatory factor. "They acquire no attachment to Place," he complained. "But wandering about Seems engrafted in their Nature; and it is a weakness incident to it that they Should forever imagine the Lands further off, are Still better than those upon which they are already Settled."<sup>97</sup> Or as the famous "long hunter," frontiersman and pioneer Daniel Boone reportedly remarked: "I think it is time to remove when I can no longer fell a tree for fuel, so that its top will lie within a few yards of my cabin."<sup>98</sup> The nature of the initial settlers of Appalachia has been vividly, if somewhat romantically, portrayed by Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt. A contemporary of Turner who explicitly wrote from a Social-Darwinist and "racial" point of view, "Teddy" left the following portrait:

The backwoodsmen lived on the clearings they had hewed out of the everlasting forests; a grim, stern people, strong and simple, powerful for good and evil, swayed by gusts of stormy passion, the love of freedom rooted in their very hearts' core. Their lives were harsh and narrow; they gained their bread by their blood and sweat, in the unending struggle with the wild ruggedness of nature. They suffered terrible injuries at the hands of the red men, and on their foes they waged a terrible warfare in return. They were relentless, revengeful, suspicious, knowing neither ruth nor pity; they were also upright, resolute, and fearless, loyal to their friends, and devoted to their country. In spite of their many failings, they were of all men the

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<sup>97</sup>

A.T. Volwiler, George Croghan and the Westward Movement, p. 212.

<sup>98</sup>

Everett Dick, The Dixie Frontier: A Social History of the Southern Frontier from the First Transmontane Beginnings to the Civil War (New York: Capricorn Books; 1964), p. 25. For a guide to the range of Boone's peregrinations, from Pennsylvania to Florida, and westward to Ohio and Michigan, see Randell Jones, In the Footsteps of Daniel Boone (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair; 2005), and the more recent Robert Morgan, Boone: A Biography (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin-Shannon Ravenel Books; 2007).



best fitted to conquer the wilderness and hold it against all comers.<sup>99</sup>

Here indeed are the breed we commonly call “frontiersmen,” the near mythical figures who haunted the forested Wilderness, whose chronicles “contain tales of the most heroic courage and of the vilest poltroonery,” but whose warfare, as Roosevelt tells us, “really did most to diminish the fighting forces of the tribes.” But despite being Turner’s contemporary, and in spite of his recognition of the real struggle for “Indian lands,” Roosevelt only uses “frontier” as a sometimes synonym for “border,” and “frontiersmen” as a very occasional alternative for “backwoodmen,” the most effective of whom he refers to as the “hunters,” “long-hunters,” “Indian scouts” or “Indian fighters.”<sup>100</sup> And in

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Theodore Roosevelt, The Winning of the West, I: From the Alleghanies to the Mississippi, 1769-1776 (n.p.: Bibliobazaar; 2006), p. 104. This passage concludes his chapter 5, “The Backwoodsmen of the Alleghanies, 1769-1774,” pp. 86-108. For a more sober and scholarly assessment of the “backcountry” see David Hackett Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York and Oxford: Oxford University; 1989, 1991), pp. 633-642.

<sup>100</sup>

Theodore Roosevelt, The Winning of the West, 2: From the Alleghanies to the Mississippi, 1777-1783 (n.p.: Kessinger Publishers; n.d.), pp. 84-93, especially pp. 87, 91-93, 235-238, 242-248. Roosevelt only begins to use the terms “frontier” and “frontiersman” more frequently, but still alongside of “border,” “border leaders,” “settlers” and “backwoodsmen” in his discussion of the West after 1783 (vols. 3 and 4), when the Native Americans and their English backers harassed and opposed the Westward Movement. Otherwise, in seeking contemporary references to frontiersmen, some might point to Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, Letters of an American Farmer, “Letter XII: Distress of a Frontier Man” of 1782-1783, in his Letters of an American Farmer [as published in S. Castillo and I. Schweitzer, eds., The Literatures of Colonial America, p. 507], as evidence of an early use of “frontiersman.” But this is not simply another form of “frontiersman” and St. John de Crevecoeur’s text suggests that here he is referring as much to an ideological “borderer” as to an actual backcountry inhabitant of a physical “frontier;” that is, to anyone who finds himself caught in a frontier limbo “between the respect I feel for the ancient connection and the fear of innovations, with the consequences of which I am not well acquainted, as they are embraced by own countrymen.” But as D.H. Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America, pp. 650-651, a mood of “anxiety and insecurity” was especially evident in the “back

so doing he merely followed the conventions of the early 1800s when even supposed “frontiersmen” like Davy Crockett more commonly recognized themselves instead as “backwoodsman.”<sup>101</sup>

Not surprisingly, the British officials seeking to manage or stem entirely the westward flow of colonial American settlers before 1776 had different and much less kind opinions of the intruders who began trickling into the vast Indian Territory gained from France in 1763. Indeed, the migration had begun even before the conclusion of peace and the imperial military officers on the spot feared – with good reason, as Pontiac’s rising would soon demonstrate – a new Indian war. “For two years past,” wrote Colonel Henry Bouquet from Fort Pitt (now Pittsburgh) in February 1762,

these Lands have been over run by a Number of Vagabonds, who under the pretense of hunting, were Making Settlements in several parts of them, of which the Indians made grievous [sic!] and repeated Complaints, as being Contrary to the Treaty made with them ..... Notwithstanding what I have done, they still in a less degree, Continue the Practices, and two days ago an Indian ... complained to me that he had discovered ten new Hutts in the Woods and many Fields cleared for Corn.<sup>102</sup>

Bouquet’s colleague, General Thomas Gage, shared his view of the problem and referred

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settlements” during the decade preceding the Revolution. While “frontiersmen” does appear occasionally in the day’s literature to refer to someone living on the “frontier” or “border,” references to “backwoodsmen” are commonplace.

<sup>101</sup>

In 1821, when an political opponent called the famed frontiersman Davy Crockett “the gentleman from the cane,” or “woods,” the latter saw this as a slight indicating his social inferiority as a mere “backwoodsman;” Randell Jones, In the Footsteps of Davy Crockett (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair; 2006), p. 32. The rise of “backwoods” dynasties and their place in America’s elite is examined in D.H. Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America, pp. 637-650.

<sup>102</sup>

Quoted in A.T. Volwiler, George Croghan and the Western Movement, pp. 210-211.

to the pioneers as “Lawless Banditti” who lived under “loose and disorderly governments.”<sup>103</sup> At this time Virginia’s Governor Dunmore, who in 1773 would launch his own aggressive Westward policy, agreed, and lamented that “I have learned from experience that the established Authority of any government in America, and the policy of Government at home, are both insufficient to restrain the Americans.”<sup>104</sup> By 1800 many of these officers’ American military successors would find themselves equally perplexed as how to square the circle of maintaining peace along their military frontiers while angry natives took up arms against even more pressing swarms of land speculators, traders, hunters, farmer-settlers, woodsmen, miners, and so on.<sup>105</sup>

As for the actual settlers, Parson Doodridge’s memoirs present a somewhat kinder but still realistic view of the pioneer-mountaineers inhabiting at least one section of trans-Appalachia a few years later, on the eve of the Revolution. He also provides a partial explanation for the restlessness that observers found so unsettling. Like many of his fellows, he tells us, his father “believed that having secured his legal allotment, the rest of the country belonged of right to those who chose to settle in it,” and that the vast

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<sup>103</sup>

Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>104</sup>

Ibid., pp. 211-212.

<sup>105</sup>

See, for example, “Squatters on Indian Land: A Letter from [Indian Agent] Benjamin Stickney to [Governor of the Michigan Territory and Superintendent of Indian Affairs] Major General John Gano, 1813,” in E. Foster, ed., The Ohio Frontier: An Anthology, pp. 137-138. The legal efforts to protect Amerindian possession, and the manner in which these were obviated and overcome, is the subject of Stuart Banner’s recent How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Western Frontier (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press-Harvard University: 2005). He deals with the changes in land policy introduced by London’s Proclamation of 1763 in particular in pp. 85-111.

lands west of the Ohio also would be settled by the method of “getting land for taking it up” as described above. At the same time, he adds, most early settlers in western Virginia and Pennsylvania also “considered their land as of little value” since they believed -- mistakenly he explains -- “that after a few years’ cultivation it would lose its fertility, at least for a long time.”<sup>106</sup> He also insists that for long after the first settlement, his father’s region remained with “neither law nor gospel” and “knew nothing of courts, lawyers, magistrates, sheriffs, or constables. Everyone was therefore at liberty ‘to do whatever was right in his own eyes,’” and “our people along the frontiers of our settlement ... had no civil, military or ecclesiastical laws, or at least none that were enforced.” Even so, given that everyone knew everyone within these sparsely settled communities in which every man carried his gun in times of war, “public opinion had its full effect and answers the purposes of legal government better than it would in a dense population, and in time of peace.” In other words, Doddridge explains, “they were a law unto themselves” with their own sense of honour, customs and techniques of settling disputes. All members of the backwoods community, for example, were expected to participate in barn raisings, log rollings, harvest festivals and similar ventures, and most especially in ensuring the common defence. According to Doddridge, those who held aloof were simply shunned. In other words, recalcitrants of the first type were left to fend for themselves, and a shirker of military service, as Doddridge puts it, “hated out as a coward.”<sup>107</sup> But as other authorities point out, backcountry disputes were frequently

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<sup>106</sup>

J. Doddridge, Note on the Settlement and Indian Wars, pp. 85-86.

<sup>107</sup>

Ibid., pp. 130-131. In this situation it is hardly surprising to find that the militia

violent and it is from these pioneers were inherit the term “Lynch Law.”<sup>108</sup>

Among the communal ceremonies weddings were special occasions for celebration. These settlers, Doddridge recalled, “in general married young.” He ascribes this to the fact that in the early years there “was no distinction of rank and very little of fortune” among them, so that “the first impression of love resulted in marriage.” The decision on nuptials made,

a wedding engaged the attention of a whole neighborhood; and the frolic was anticipated by young and old with eager expectation. This is not to be wondered at, when it is told that a wedding was almost the only gathering which was not accompanied with the labor of reaping, log rolling, building a cabin, or planning some scout or campaign.<sup>109</sup>

But all in all, Doddridge concludes his portrait with a passage demonstrating a parson’s sense of cultured superiority. For all the virtues and exuberance of the backcountry’s inhabitants, he insists that the

state of society and manners of the early settlers ... shows very clearly that

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continued to be as important as a social institution as it was as a military one; see Harry S. Laver, Citizens More Than Soldiers: The Kentucky Militia and Society in the Early Republic (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska; 2007). It is interesting that in 1753, after suffering financial ruin, the Indian trader George Croghan had escaped his debtors and their magistrates by moving “30 Miles back of all Inhabitation on ye frontiers,” as he put it in a letter to Sir William Johnson on 10 September 1755; A.T. Volwiler, George Croghan and the Westward Movement, p. 48.

<sup>108</sup>

A more scholarly and less idealized view of “backcountry” society -- law, justice, governance and assertion of “natural liberty” included – is provided by D.H. Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America, pp. 759-782. He deals with the prevalence of vigilantism and origins Lynch Law on pp. 766-767, as do the readings in “The Origins of American Vigilantism: Regulators and Lynch-Law,” in Richard Maxwell Brown, ed., American Violence (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall; 1970), pp. 20-23.

<sup>109</sup>

J. Doddridge, Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars, p. 102.

their grade of civilization was, indeed, low enough. The descendants of the English cavaliers from Maryland and Virginia, who settled mostly along the rivers, and the descendants of the [Scots-]Irish, who settled the interior parts of the country, were neither of them remarkable for science or urbanity of manners. The former were mostly illiterate, rough in their manners, and addicted to the rude diversions of Horse racing, wrestling, jumping, shooting, dancing, etc. These diversions were often accompanied by with personal combats, which consisted of blows, kicks, biting and gouging. This mode of fighting was what they called rough and tumble. Sometimes a previous stipulation was made to use fists only. Yet these people were industrious, enterprising, generous in their hospitality, and brave in the defense of their country.<sup>110</sup>

But these virtues admitted, our parson added that he had “presented this unpleasant portrait of the rude manners of our forefathers” because by 1824, he believed that their “state and society” already were “fast vanishing from the memory of man.” He therefore sought “to give the youth of our country a knowledge of the advantages of civilization, and to give contentment to the aged by preventing them from saying ‘that former times were better than the present.’”<sup>111</sup>

While Doddridge believed his childhood world of the backwoods had disappeared by the date of his Notes, it had in fact only moved further into the Wilderness. But if the Westward Movement picked up momentum following the Revolution, Henry Adams’

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<sup>110</sup>

Ibid., p. 142 (italics in original). On the issue of “rough and tumble,” also see Henry Adams, History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson (New York: Library of America; 1986), pp.38-39. He correctly notes that the English travellers of the day who sneered at this practice “as American barbarism, might have seen the same sight in Yorkshire at the same date.” For, he adds, like most other American entertainments, this style of fight “was English in origin, and was brought to Virginia and the Carolinas in early days, whence it spread to the Ohio and the Mississippi.” These aspects of backcountry society, and their origins, are discussed at greater length in D.H. Hackett, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America, pp. 652-702.

<sup>111</sup>

J. Doddridge, Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars, p. 106.

analysis of the census of 1800 demonstrates that it was then still in its infancy. Of the reported 5,308,483 inhabitants of the United States, he points out, “more than two-thirds ... clung to the seaboard within fifty miles of tide-water, where alone the wants of civilized life could be supplied..” For despite two hundred years of effort, “the land was still untamed; forest covered every portion, except here or there a strip of cultivated soil.” At this point, in fact, even

western New York remained a wilderness: Buffalo was not laid out; Indian titles were not extinguished; Rochester did not exist; and the county of Onondaga numbered a population of less than eight thousand. In 1799 Utica contained fifty houses, mostly small and temporary. Albany was still a Dutch city, with some five thousand inhabitants; and the tide of immigration flowed through it into the valley of the Mohawk, while another stream from Pennsylvania spread towards the Genesee country.<sup>112</sup>

It therefore is small wonder that as Adams observes later, most foreign visitors left with “sober if not sad” impressions of a “thousand miles of desolate and dreary forest, broken here and there with settlements” and, along the coastline, “a few flourishing towns devoted to commerce,” but devoid of the arts and sustaining merely “a provincial literature.” Similarly, it is even less surprising that most such foreigners, as well as many influential Americans, considered the archetypical American -- be they trans-Allegheny pioneers or not -- to be rural.<sup>113</sup>

Furthermore, Adams points out, the prospect of a rapid advance into the West hardly

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H. Adams, History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson, pp. 5, 6. He points out (p. 5) that since nearly 20 % were Black slaves, some 4.5 million “free” whites comprised “the true political population,” within which there were “less than one million able-bodied males, on whose shoulders fell the burden of a continent.”

<sup>113</sup>

Ibid., pp. 107, 43.

seemed promising. After all, it had taken a century for the Dutch to settle the Mohawk valley and only a few years had passed since many New Englanders, considered “the shrewdest and most enterprising of Americans,” had given up their battles with that region’s barren and stony soil “to learn the comforts of easier existence in the valleys of the Mohawk and Ohio.” So while some 400,000 to 500,000 Americans had migrated across the Alleghenies by 1800, settlement of the Mississippi border region hardly seemed imminent. After all, that river was some thousand miles from New York while the republic’s extreme southwestern military outpost, below Natchez, was some twelve hundred miles from Washington. Meanwhile, apart from the handful of trails, “traces” or roads that provided access to trans-Appalachia, roads had improved little since 1700, water links had yet to be developed, and as before, “Americans struggling with the untamed continent seemed hardly more competent to their task than the beavers or buffalo which had for countless generations made bridges and roads of their own..” And since at least one-hundred miles of mountain country “held the two regions everywhere apart,” there was nowhere that the eastern settlements directly touched those of the west, and the new settlers “found themselves struggling with difficulties all their own, in an isolation like that of Jutes or Angles in the fifth century” in England. In such conditions it is almost a tribute to the postal system, which maintained nine hundred post-offices on over 20,000 miles of primitive postal roads, that it took a mere twenty-two days for a letter to reach Nashville from Philadelphia, and perhaps no surprise that gross receipts for the fiscal year ending 1 October 1801 amounted to a mere \$320,000.<sup>114</sup>

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Ibid., pp. 5-7, 14. The role of the post service in later pioneer life, and the difficulties in



By 1800 there were some 70,000 to 80,000 living in “a society, already old” at Pittsburg and along the Monongahela, while the settlements along the Ohio had achieved a significance that “threatened to force a difficult problem on the union of the older states.” To the north of that last river, New Englanders of the Ohio Company had settled at Marietta, another 15,000 concentrated at Cincinnati, and halfway between the two still others had created a small village at Chillicothe. In all, “other villages or straggling cabins included,” the American population of whole Ohio territory still only reached 45,000. Elsewhere in transmontane America, Kentucky was the largest community with a reported 180,000 Whites and 40,000 Black slaves, while Tennessee had another 90,000 Whites and 14,000 slaves. In this manner, Adams says, the original coastal states had “sent westwards a wedge-shaped mass of nearly half a million persons, penetrating by the Tennessee, Cumberland, and Ohio rivers toward the western limit of the Union.” Equally important, by 1800 this wedge of White settlement, “with its apex at Nashville and its flanks covered by the Ohio and Tennessee rivers, nearly split the Indian territory in halves.” As Adams admits, the latter “offered sharp resistance to this invasion, exacting life for life, and yielding only as their warriors perished.” Yet the following decades would demonstrate that they remained powerful and, to the south, where the weak state of Georgia claimed the southwestern territory -- western Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi – he believes “that a well-concerted movement of Indians might without much difficulty have swept back its white population of one-hundred thousand toward

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maintaining regular contact, is illustrated in the correspondence contained in “Following the Dream: Letters of the Thomson Family in Ohio and Indiana, 1818-1836,” in E. Foster, ed., The Ohio Frontier: An Anthology, pp. 200-204.

the ocean or across the Savannah River.”<sup>115</sup>

Adams’ description of these pioneers to a large extent echoes those of both many foreign visitors and the domestic Federalist and conservative opponents of “democracy” as then conceived. Taking an almost aristocratic tone, he insists that these settlers of 1800 were very different from the idealists who had founded Massachusetts, Pennsylvania or Virginia. “From Lake Erie to Florida,” he writes,

in long, unbroken line, pioneers were at work, cutting into the forests with the energy of so many beavers, and with no more express moral purpose than the beavers they drove away. The civilization they carried with them was rarely illumined by an idea; they sought room for no new truth, and aimed neither at creating, like the Puritans, a government of saints, nor, like the Quakers, one of love and peace; they left such experiments behind them, and wrestled only with the hardest problems of frontier life. No wonder that foreign observers and even the educated well-to-do Americans of the sea-coast, could seldom see anything to admire in the ignorance and brutality of frontiersmen, and should declare that virtue and wisdom no longer guided the United States! What they saw was not encouraging. To a new society, ignorant and semi-barbarous, a mass of demagogues insisted on applying every stimulant that could inflame its worst appetites, while at the same instant taking away every influence that had hitherto helped restrain its passions. Greed for wealth, lust for power, yearning for the blank void of savage freedom such as Indians and wolves delighted in – these were the fires that flamed under the caldron of American society, in which, as conservatives believed, the old, well-proven, conservative crust of religion, government, family and even common respect for age, education, and experience was rapidly melting away, and indeed was already broken into fragments, swept about by the seething mass of scum ever rising in greater numbers.<sup>116</sup>

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H. Adams, History of the United States of America during the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson, pp. 5-6, 7. In his follow-on History of the United States of America during the Administrations of James Madison (New York: Library of America; 1986), p. 1287, Adams gives a figure of 370,000 for the population of Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee, which taken with the 100,000 in Georgia’s southwest territory, makes up his nearly half-million inhabitants in trans-Appalachia.

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H. Adams, History of the United States of America during the Administrations of

Although the numbers of these pioneers were limited, Adams elsewhere suggests that by 1800 most foreigners, as well as many conservative Americans, sadly considered those whom we now hail as “frontiersmen,” figures such as the “Mississippi boatman and the squatter on Indian lands,” as already being “perhaps the most distinctly American type[s?] then existing, as far removed from the Old World as though Europe were a dream.” And he charitably admits that if “no one denied the roughness of the lower classes in the South and Southwest” or elsewhere, this was not “wholly confined to them.” Yet Adams also concluded that while the “[b]order society was not refined, ... among its vices, as its virtues, few were permanent, and little idea could be drawn of the character that would at last emerge.”<sup>117</sup>

In reviewing the Republic that had emerged by 1820 Adams notes that matters had changed drastically. By that date the American population had reached a total of 9,634,000. More significantly, apart from some redistribution among the Atlantic States in favour of New England and the Middle States vis-a-vis the south, the most astounding increase had been in the trans-Appalachian West. There, for example, the inhabitants of

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Thomas Jefferson, p. 121. He adds that while democrats “protested in a thousand forms” again this assessment, they never did so “in any mode of expression which satisfied them all, or explained their whole character;” Ibid., pp. 121-122. One might note that this passage contains one of Adams’ rare references to “frontiersmen.”

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Ibid., p. 40. In this regard, the historian Gary Wills recently observed that “Adams’ view of the West is more sophisticated than Frederick Jackson Turner’s. In the Turner’s theory, and in popular sentiment, the West exercises a kind of automatic magnetism, drawing people to new frontiers, ... democratizing the settler in the mere process of removal.” He insists Adams is more in accord with modern historians who argue that rather than the West “acting as a separate principle, on its own, at odds with the East, the West was driven by forces from the East;” see his Henry Adams and the Making of America (New York: Houghton Mifflin; 2005), p. 375.

Ohio, Kentucky and Tennessee had risen from 370,000 in 1800 to some 1,567,000, or by a ratio of 1:4.23.<sup>118</sup> The motives behind this massive migration varied from region to region but over-population in the east and the search for new agricultural lands undoubtedly played a part. This was especially true in the South thanks to the exhaustion of much of the soil of the great tobacco and other plantations. As a committee of the North Carolina legislature reported on 30 November 1815, the sad fact was that the state could hardly support more than 600,000 people. Consequently, this report noted:

Within twenty-five years past more than two hundred thousand of our inhabitants have removed to the waters of the Ohio, Tennessee, and Mobile; and it is mortifying to witness that thousands of our wealthy and respectable citizens are annually moving to the West, ... and that thousands of our poorer citizens follow them, being literally driven away by the prospect of poverty....<sup>119</sup>

Furthermore, despite desperate attempts by Atlantic states like Virginia to retain their commercial dominance over the western lands, the opening of the Mississippi, and introduction of the steamboat, offered these lands' inhabitants a competitive alternative. In addition, with the power of their Amerindian opponents broken, Adams argues that the Americans had cleared "away every obstacle to the occupation and development of their continent as far as the Mississippi River," and that "the continent lay before them like an uncovered ore-bed."<sup>120</sup>

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H. Adams, History of the United States of America during the Administrations of James Madison, p. 1287.

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Quoted in Ibid., p. 1293.

120

Ibid., p. 1300. On the western "frontiermen-boatmen" see Michael Allen, Western Rivermen, 1763-1861: Ohio and Mississippi Boatmen and the Myth of the Alligator

Despite, or perhaps because of the opening of new horizons, throughout this period the wanderlust of many pioneers had meanwhile remained unabated. Writing of those traveling the Natchez Trace in the South during the 1790s-early 1800s, William Davis describes them as “opportunists” resembling “a flock of birds, alighting on a fresh field to pick it clean, and then taking flight once more in search of another.”<sup>121</sup> Like birds, he continues, they “refused to stay put” and time after time, they arrived at a new site, built their cabins, cleared their fields but, “after ‘one or two crops,’ ... they got the itch for better land,” and moved on.<sup>122</sup> One such was William Ramsey, a hunter-farmer, who when “neighbors began to settle from two to five miles from him, ...became uneasy.” As a result, he moved with his family to live in nine places in the twelve years between 1808 to 1820, before finally settling in southeast Mississippi.<sup>123</sup> While the above-mentioned lack of faith in the land’s limited productivity may have been one factor, the search for the Anglo-Scottish borderers’ ideal of “natural liberty” was undoubtedly another. One Gideon Lincecum, for example, recalled that his father, who arrived in today’s Alabama from Georgia, had gone “through the ‘one or two crops’ process over and over again” as he repeatedly sought to keep ahead of the line of settlement. Describing one occasion, when his father chaffed at watching others push on still further

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Horse (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University; 1990).

<sup>121</sup>

William C. Davis, A Way Through the Wilderness: The Natchez Trace and the Civilization of the Southern Frontier (New York: HarperCollins; 1995) p. 82.

<sup>122</sup>

Ibid.

<sup>123</sup>

E. Dick, The Dixie Frontier, p. 25; W.C. Davis, A Way Through the Wilderness, p. 83.

to westwards, the son explained: “‘My father loved the border life’ ... and once more he sold out and set off to find a new edge of civilization.” And, Davis adds, if the Lincecums “appeared to overdo their wanderlust in roamings through the Old Southwest,” they were not atypical.<sup>124</sup> In 1832 another pioneer, echoing Daniel Boone, explained his decision to move still further westward to the Mississippi with the words: “I have no elbow room. I cannot move without seeing the nose of my neighbour sticking out between the trees.”<sup>125</sup>

Even so, many did come, resist the urge to move ever onward, and stay to become the founders of the new towns that soon dotted the Mississippi territory and later states of Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee.<sup>126</sup> One such was Hezekiah Massey, a long-lived

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Ibid., pp. 83-85. Such movements also occurred for economic motives as well. The settlement of the Northwest provides examples of similar behaviour there; see, for example, “The Hard Life of a Small Farmer: Recollections of William Cooper Howells,” in E. Foster, ed., The Ohio Frontier: An Anthology, pp. 143-148. This Quaker family arrived in Ohio in 1813, and changed farms three times between 1818 and 1825 before giving up their efforts to live off the soil.

<sup>125</sup>

E. Dick, The Dixie Frontier, p. 25. Other backwoodsmen were similarly mobile; see, for example, the “geographical biography” in Randell Jones, In the Footsteps of Davy Crockett (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair; 2006). On this issue in general, see Arthur K. Moore, The Frontier Mind: A Cultural Analysis of the Kentucky Frontiersman (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky; 1957). The Anglo-Scottish Border concept of “natural liberty” is outlined in D.H. Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America, pp. 777-782, who concludes that this was what Daniel Boone (and presumably others) meant by “elbow room.”

<sup>126</sup>

Stephen Aron, American Confluence: The Missouri Frontier from Borderland to Border State (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana; 2006), chapters 3-6. As elsewhere, the founding of such towns and creation of counties are celebrated in a series of local histories, typical of which are Albert James Pickett’s celebrated 1851 History of Alabama and incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi from the Earliest Period (Montgomery, AL: River City Publishing reprint; 2003); Margaret Pace Farmer’s

farmer who arrived in Alabama with his parents at age nine, “who had never seen a train and did not know ‘a letter in a book,’” and who depended “almost exclusively upon his own crops and razorback hogs to feed a burgeoning family. In his old age he liked to boast that he had never bought a bushel of corn and only sixteen pounds of meat.”<sup>127</sup>

Others included the tanner Robert Love and his wife Ann. They arrived in Alabama in 1819, the same year in which that state was created from a section of western Georgia. After some moving about, they finally settled in Monticello in Pike County in 1827. There Ann operated a tavern until Troy became the county seat, where she moved and at age 58, managed another tavern even after Robert’s death in 1832. Two of her sons, however, continued the family’s pioneering tradition by migrating farther west to settle in Texas.<sup>128</sup> Otherwise, we should note that despite later traditions to the contrary, few of these pioneers were wealthy slave-owning planters. “Overwhelmingly,” writes W.C. Davis, “the majority were the simple families of immigrants, squatters and legal landowners, who came to eke out a new life on the cheap land.”<sup>129</sup> And although slavery

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History of Pike County Alabama (Troy, AL: Author; 1952); and Hewitt Clarke’s, Thunder at Meridian: A True Story of Courage and Violence in the Deepest South. Meridian, Mississippi, 1695-1995 (Spring, TX: Lone Star Press; 1995).

<sup>127</sup>

Virginia Van der Veer Hamilton, Alabama: A History (New York and Nashville, TN: W.W. Norton/ American Association for State and Local History; 1977, 1984), pp. 5-6.

<sup>128</sup>

The Love family’s history is recounted in William J. Rice, Trojan Influence (Troy, AL: Troy Sesquicentennial Committee; 1993), pp. 7-8.

<sup>129</sup>

W.C. Davis, A Way Through the Wilderness, p. 82. More recently still, however, the importance of plantations, and slavery, has been reasserted in Roger G. Kennedy, Mr. Jefferson’s Lost Cause: Land, Slavery, and the Louisiana Purchase (Oxford: Oxford University; 2003).

did exist, in this region it usually was hardly the type found on the plantations of Gone With the Wind, few of which existed in many areas. Rather, the majority of Alabama farms were of the smaller, free-hold owner-operated yeoman-farmer variety “with one or two slaves working besides their masters in the field,” and sometimes ending by lying beside the latter in the family burial plot.<sup>130</sup>

Partly as a result of the continuing out-migrations westwards, but more due to the continuing presence of the native Creeks and Cherokees, settlement of the new state’s northern sections proceeded more slowly than one might be imagine. That second obstacle, of course, disappeared during the decade 1828-1838 with the forcible removal westwards along the “Trail of Tears” of the five Amerindian “Civilized Nations,” the two mentioned included. By the 1820s the American Board of Missions had an establishment working to “educate and Christianize” the Cherokee at Wills Town, where the great chief Sequoyah reportedly introduced his native alphabet. But despite the missionaries’ support for the opposition of the majority of Native inhabitants, the American authorities finally obtained the so-called “Cherokee Cession” by the Treaty of New Echota in late December 1835. This permitted the creation of DeKalb and two other new Alabama counties in January 1836. In order to round up the majority of

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Landmarks of DeKalb County -- Historic Fort Payne Committee, Historic Fort Payne, 1889-1989, 2 vols. (Fort Payne, AL: Landmarks of DeKalb County, Inc.; 1988-1989), 1, p. 6. This of course understates the place of slavery in Alabama as a whole since the expansion of settlement more generally brought that of the cotton and sugar plantation economies as chronicled in Adam Rothman, Slave Country: American Expansion and the Origins of the Deep South (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 2005), chapter 2. With regard to the burial of slaves on family plots, this writer has personally seen such graves on the grounds of an abandoned farm on adjacent Sand Mountain near Collinsville, Alabama.



Cherokees who remained recalcitrant, the United States Army then established a number of “forts” or “stockades” for holding them while they awaited removal. One such was near the missionary settlement of Willstown, and it became known as Fort Payne after its garrison commander, Captain John G. Payne of the 64<sup>th</sup> Alabama Regiment.<sup>131</sup>

The “removal” complete, DeKalb county was opened to settlers. One of the first to arrive was Jesse Gaston Beeson who, although lame, had already moved his wife Drucilla and children from North Carolina by ox cart and covered wagon to Fort Payne, and then built a cabin by Crystal Lake near Fort Payne, some two miles from his nearest neighbours at Cherokee. A town, first called Rawlingsville, soon sprang up and became DeKalb’s first county seat, after which Beeson was named the postmaster and his cabin the post office.<sup>132</sup> He also became proprietor of the area’s general store, the shelves of

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Ibid., 1, p. 5.; Landmarks of DeKalb County, The DeKalb Legend, 6 (Fort Payne, AL: Landmarks of DeKalb County, Inc.; 1980), p. 20, which prints a photograph of Payne’s original cabin which was torn down only in 1946; Zora Shay Strayhorn, Mentone, Alabama: A History (Mentone, AL: Mentone Area Preservation Association; 1986), pp. 7, 12-13. The often dubious legal justifications for these actions are examined by Stuart Banner in his How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press-Harvard University; 2005), pp. 191-227. More generally, American decisions are discussed in Ronald N. Satz, American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska; 1975), and their overall impact and Amerindian responses by Grant Foreman, Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 1932). On the Cherokees in particular see John Ehle, Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation (New York: Anchor Books; 1988), and most recently, in Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears (New York: Viking-Penguin Library of American Indian History; 2007).

<sup>132</sup>

In the mid-1820s the young French visitor Alexis de Tocquville described the postal

which he personally stocked through trips on horseback with covered wagons to Charleston, North Carolina. In 1842 this skilled craftsman and industrious merchant also began homesteading the 226 acres he received by two grants in that November. Thereafter, Beeson concentrated on farming and over the next fifteen years obtained an additional 182 acres in four grants, bought additional land from various neighbours, to create one of the county's largest plantations, one that comprised some thousand acres and was at least partly worked by slaves.<sup>133</sup>

Rawlingville, later renamed Fort Payne meanwhile developed into what its local historians describe as "a small Southern highland town" surrounded by a handful of plantations and a large number of smaller independent family farms.<sup>134</sup> In 1859 the area received its first doctor in the person of William Addison Elrod, a former print worker and recent graduate from South Carolina who settled with his wife and infant daughter at Town Creek on Sand Mountain. Clearing seventy-five acres of woodland, he also

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service in such "frontier districts." Travelling by "a sort of open cart called a mail coach" on roads recently cut through "immense forests of green trees," the way lit at night by larch torches, from "time to time we came to a hut in the forest," the post office. They then "dropped an enormous bundle of letters at the door of this isolated dwelling, and ... went galloping on again, leaving each inhabitant of the neighborhood to come and fetch his share of that treasure;" see his Democracy in America, ed. J.P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper-Perrenial; 1969), p. 303 (footnote).

<sup>133</sup>

The Beeson family's early history is outlined in Landmarks of DeKalb County, The DeKalb Legend, 6, pp. 24-25. The birth of at least five slave children is recorded in the Beeson family Bible.

<sup>134</sup>

Landmarks of DeKalb County -- Historic Fort Payne Committee, Historic Fort Payne, 1889-1989, p. 6.

became a farmer and introduced his fellows in the region to the advantages of using artificial fertilizer (guano) in their cotton fields.<sup>135</sup> Meanwhile, nearby Mentone on Lookloff Mountain became known as Ellison's Precinct since one Ellison had established a grist mill there, although the first house was built there only in 1854. Others gradually followed suit, including a second-generation English cotton-buyer from Savannah in 1860. For the most part, however, major immigration into and more general prosperity within the region only came in the period following the end of the Civil War in 1865.<sup>136</sup>

As these cases indicate, over time the influence of church, court and school followed

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Landmarks of DeKalb County, The DeKalb Legend, 6, pp. 26-27. The Elrod family produced a dynasty of doctors who have served in DeKalb or adjacent counties to this day.

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Z.S. Strayhorn, Mentone, Alabama: A History, pp. 7-8. Apart from the other works already cited, the post-1783 Western Movement into the Old Southwest or Mississippi Territory is briefly described in Kit Carson Carter III, "The Territorial Governors of the Alabama Area, 1798-1819," in Samuel L. Webb and Margaret E. Armbruster, eds., Alabama Governors: A Political History of the State (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama; 2001), pp. 7-12; and more extensively in Henry deLeon Southerland, Jr., and Jerry Elijah Brown, The Federal Road through Georgia, the Creek Nation, and Alabama, 1806-1836 (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama; 1989); John R. Finger, Tennessee Frontiers: Three Regions in Transition (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana; 2001); and the other works cited below. For the more northern movement and the Northwest Territory at this time see R. Douglas Hurt's companion volume, The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 2001), and James E. Davis, Frontier Illinois (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 1998). The vocabulary of the pioneers can be sampled in Emily Foster, ed., The Ohio Frontier: An Anthology. In the contemporary accounts collected in this last, as in other similar collections, use of the term "frontier" is notable for its near absence! The Indian removal from the Ohio territory, and its consequences, is most recently surveyed in Stephen Warren, The Shawnees and Their Neighbours, 1795-1870 (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois; 2005).

to make itself felt in the wake of the advancing wave of pioneer-settlers, all of whom were not necessarily as uncultured and illiterate as the Reverend Doddridge suggests. This was especially the case in the Northwest Ohio region where New Englanders, thanks to post-revolutionary land enterprises like the Ohio Company, moved westward to found Marietta and later, Cincinnati, where visitors soon reported that “the state of society is very excellent.” By 1811 in Cincinnati schools were said to be well-attended, the people “very correct in their morals” and served by three newspapers.<sup>137</sup> Indeed, even further south many of the subsequent pioneers who had followed Doddridge’s father into the Trans-Appalachia, were more “cultured,” or at least more literate than their predecessors. True, some of the new arrivals found conditions too harsh and departed again back to the East, like the “poor devils” whom Colonel John May of Massachusetts, a representative of the Ohio Company, maintained had come “from home moneyless and brainless, and have returned as they came....” He himself, arrived in Marietta during 1788-1789 and understood full well the impact of their settlements on the existing Wilderness. “I am of the opinion that deer are plentier in this country than horned cattle are in New England,” he wrote. “However, this state of things will not last long; for whenever a country begins to be settled, the native inhabitants must either flee or perish outright....”<sup>138</sup> This last, of course, was equally true for genuine

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“A Businessman’s Perspective: The Travels of John Melish, 1811,” in E. Foster, ed., The Ohio Frontier: An Anthology, p. 127.

<sup>138</sup>

“Marietta in Its Infancy: The Journal of Colonel John May, 1788-1789,” in Ibid., pp. 75, 77.

backwoodsmen who, lamenting the destruction of the Wilderness, continued to move west in search of “elbow room,” and so to open the path to further settlement. Consequently, for another half-century the lives of many of the settlers surging westward towards the Mississippi-Missouri line still often paralleled those of the backwoodsmen a half-century earlier. As late as 1835, for example, when a traveller, who was passing by canal-boat up the Scioto River, asked a riverbank settler’s wife the name of her township or county, he was answered by a giggle, apparent incomprehension and then, finally, the reply, “in an out-in-the-woods place, she reckoned.”<sup>139</sup>

All these themes are evident in the observations of the young French traveller Alexis de Tocqueville. Visiting the newly created western states in 1825, he reported that when “a few bold adventurers began to penetrate into the Mississippi” in the late 1700s, it “was like a new discovery of America.” Thereafter, he continues, “previously unheard of communities suddenly sprang up in the wilderness” and “States that had not even been names a few years before took their places in the American Union.”<sup>140</sup> Unlike the East, where “both literary and practical education have been carried furthest, ... and religion and freedom are most clearly linked,” in the West some of these “advantages are still lacking.” Indeed, many of these new states’ or territories’ inhabitants

were born in the forest, and they mix the ideas and customs of savage life

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“A Young Man’s Travels: The Journal of Cyrus P. Bradley, 1835,” in *Ibid.*, p. 191. This arrogant 16-year-old student of Dartmouth College added censoriously that her children “are growing up in ignorance, perfect darkness, intellectually....”

<sup>140</sup>

A. de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 55.

with the civilization of their fathers. Passions are more violent with them, religious morality has less authority, and their convictions are less decided. There men have no control over each other, for they hardly know each other. So, to some extent, the westerners display the inexperience and disorderly habits of a nation coming to birth. For though the elements from which their societies are formed are old, they are newly mixed together.

Nonetheless, he had no doubt that the westerners shared the “mores,” as he calls them, “that make the Americans of the United States, alone among Americans, capable of maintaining the rule of democracy.”<sup>141</sup>

Underlying these comments were the concrete but sometimes paradoxical impressions made by the inhabitants of these western “frontier districts”<sup>142</sup> on the young Frenchman. On the one hand, he insists that there was an equality in “mental endowments” as well as in wealth, and he believed that “there is no other country in the world where, proportionally to the population, there are so few ignorant and so few learned individuals as in America.”<sup>143</sup> On the other, however, he later maintains that it “is hard to imagine how incredibly quickly ideas circulate in these empty spaces” found on “the extreme borders of the confederate states.” There,

where organized society and the wilderness meet, there is a population of bold adventurers who to escape the poverty threatening them in their fathers’ homes, have dared to plunge into the solitudes of America seeking a new homeland there. As soon as the pioneer reaches his place of refuge, he hastily fells a few trees and

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Ibid., p. 308.

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De Tocqueville uses this term in his footnote in Ibid., p. 303, on of the very few occasions on which “frontier” appears in his massive (over 700 pp.) study.

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Ibid., p. 55.

- builds a log cabin in the forest. Nothing could look more wretched than these isolated dwellings. The traveler approaching one toward evening sees the hearth fire flicker through the chinks in the walls, and at night, when the wind rises, he hears the roof of boughs shake to and fro in the midst of the great forest trees. Who would not suppose that this poor hut sheltered some rude and ignorant folk? But one should not assume any connection between the pioneer and the place that shelters him. All his surroundings are primitive and wild, but he is the product of some eighteen centuries of labor and experience. He wears the clothes and talks the language of a town; he is aware of the past, curious about the future, and ready to argue about the present; He is a very civilized man prepared for a time to face life in that forest, plunging into the wilderness of the New World with his Bible, ax, and newspaper.<sup>144</sup>

Consequently, unlike the American conservatives and foreign visitors of a half-century earlier as cited by Adams, the French traveller recognized that the backwoods pioneer was indeed as much a product of a long Anglo-European heritage as he was of the vast American Wilderness.

Furthermore, de Tocqueville argued that for good or ill, it was thanks to these conditions that it was “in the West that one can see democracy in its most extreme form.” This he explains by the fact that in the new western states were “in some sense improvisations of fortune, the populations had “arrived only yesterday in the land in which they dwell. They hardly know one another, and each man is ignorant of his neighbor’s history.” For this reason, in the newly settled districts there were as yet neither great, old established names or prominent men of wealth, nor “a natural

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<sup>144</sup>

Ibid., p. 303. It is in this context that de Tocqueville describes the wilderness postal service mentioned above. Although backwoods hospitality was undoubtedly a fact, some still might have found de Tocqueville’s generalizations somewhat idealized. For the range of individual examples, see “A Trip Along Zane’s Trace: Selections from Fortescue Cuming’s Travel Book, 1807,” in E. Foster, ed., The Ohio Frontier: An Anthology, pp. 116-125.

aristocracy of wealth or probity,” capable of overawing or influencing the inhabitants. This meant, he continued, that these infant states “of the West” already had inhabitants, “but not as yet a society.”<sup>145</sup> Yet he also pointed out that “when the citizens are all more or less equal, it becomes difficult to defend their freedom from the encroachments of power.” After all, he warned, “only a combination of the forces of all is able to guarantee liberty” from the threat of despotism, and “such a combination is not always forthcoming.” But the Anglo-Americans, he adds, had been “lucky enough to escape absolute power. Circumstances, origin, education, and above all mores allowed them to establish and maintain the sovereignty of the people.”<sup>146</sup>

To this point the reader will have noticed that throughout the above review, I distinguish between “the Westward Movement” of agricultural (and other) settlers, and an advancing state “border” or military “frontier.” To some this distinction may seem mere pedantry, especially if we accept that by the 1780s-early 1800s, Americans, contemplating “the settlement or conquest of the North American continent” already had focused their attention westwards and begun “to call areas beyond the pale of their civilization ‘frontiers.’”<sup>147</sup> Indeed, the historians Andrew Cayton and Fredrika Teute have insisted that if the British colonists along the Atlantic coast “referred to the

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<sup>145</sup>

A. de Tocquville, Democracy in America, p. 55.

<sup>146</sup>

Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>147</sup>

E.R.L. Cayton and F.J. Teute, Contact Points, p. 1, who base their case largely on J.T. Juricek, “American Useage of the Word ‘Frontier,’” pp. 10-34.



regions west of their settlements as ‘the ‘backcountry,’ [as being] quite literally, the land behind them as they faced toward Europe,” but that by the late 1700s the new Republic’s citizens had shifted their focus on the inland wilderness. At this time, they add, Americans then also began using the term “frontiers” with reference to the unsettled, and hence uncivilized, lands to the west of the Appalachians and Ohio. By so doing, these writers add, the Americans were adopting an Enlightenment concept of social development from hunter-gatherers through farmers to urban dwellers, and by expansion they sought to extend their vision of their new nation. And while this can be dismissed as ethnocentric, if not racist, rhetoric and hubris, they rightly point out that “the histories of the American Republic and the meaning of frontier have been intertwined ever since.”<sup>148</sup>

More recently Andro Linklater, a critic of Turner, has taken a similar position and argued that the latter’s theory “seemed the more credible because the myth of the frontier was already lodged in every American’s imagination,” and that history “was in fact the last discipline to appreciate its power.” Linklater, however, dates the rise of the concept of the frontier to 1820s, crediting this to Thomas Cole’s romantic canvases of the Upper Hudson Valley, the subsequent paintings by others of Western landscapes,<sup>149</sup> and the

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E.R.L. Cayton and F.J. Teute, eds., Contact Points, pp. 1-2. This “progressive” nature of the frontier in its early stages is discussed in Peter S. Onuf, “Liberty, Development, and Union: Visions of the West in the 1780s,” William and Mary Quarterly, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 43 (1986), pp. 179-213, and in the 1800s in D.H. Murdoch, The American West, pp. 15-19.

<sup>149</sup>

The response of American artists to eastern and western “frontier” landscapes is recounted by Andrew Wilton and Tim Barringer, American Sublime: Landscape

works of writers describing the original inhabitants of the former backcountry. These, he tells us, culminated in “James Fenimore Cooper’s iconic character Natty Bumppo or Leatherstocking, “ the central figure of the cycle of “Leatherstocking novels” that opened with The Pioneers in 1823 and closed with The Deerslayer in 1841. In part apparently based on the famous “long hunter” (or “frontiersman”) Daniel Boone, Natty was described as having been raised by the Delaware Indians, conditioned by his life in the backcountry forests, and and as standing “for simple virtues and the vast freedom of the unclaimed land. When he leveled his rifle at an intruder, saying, ‘If you come a foot nigher you shall have frontier punishment,’ the reader knew he was not bluffing.”<sup>150</sup>

This statement by Cooper’s hero seems conclusive evidence for the existing consensus that the concept of a settlement frontier, however one otherwise characterizes it, has roots in the American psyche that long predated Turner.

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Painting in the United States, 1820-1880 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University; 2003), and more concisely, “Portfolio I: “The Romantic Horizon,” in W.H. Goetzmann, Exploration and Empire, pp. 199-228.

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Quoted in Andro Linklater, The Fabric of America: How Our Borders and Boundaries Shaped the Country and Forged Our National Identity (New York: Walker; 2007), p. 253 (italics added). Cooper’s role in the frontier tradition is similarly noted in K.L. Steckmesser, The Westward Movement, p. 400, and by D.H. Murdoch, The American West, pp. 13, 27-28, who also comments on the Boone-Leatherstocking connection. Otherwise, Cooper’s life and publishing career are outlined briefly in James D. Hart, The Oxford Companion to American Literature, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., rev. Phillip W. Leininger (Oxford: Oxford University; 1995), pp. 142-143, which also summarizes the “Leather-Stocking Tales”(p. 363). Although the last published was The Deerslayer, Bumppo’s death actually occurs in The Prairie (1827). James K. Folsom provides another brief assessment of Cooper and his influence, with a bibliographical note, in H.R. Lamar, The Reader’s Encyclopedia of the American West, pp. 257-259.

On closer examination, however, this conclusion -- whether dated from the 1790s or 1820s -- is far less obvious than many suggest. Indeed, a reading of even Cooper's celebrated The Pioneers reveals his use of the term "frontiers" in the old military sense, but that his characters, Natty Bumppo included, regard themselves as living not on the frontier, but on the "skirts of society" and in "new parts of the state." Again, rather than opposing state law to frontier law, Leatherstocking speaks of "law of the mountains" or "of the wilderness," this last being his preferred term for the vast expanses that lay beyond the edge of White settlement.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, in many ways Bumppo is typical and resembles other "backwoodsmen" who despite their reputation for hospitality, clearly resented their need to come to terms with the advancing wave of settlement. On stopping at Buffington's Island while travelling in the Ohio territory in 1807, for example, the traveller Fortescue Cummings sought shelter in the cabin of the family of Peter Neisanger (or Niswonger). Although Peter "did not say us 'nay' to our request for supper," he records, "his 'yea' was in the very extreme of bluntness, and without either the manner or expression which sometimes merits its having joined to it the adjective honest." But over the meal he gradually gathered that his grumpy host once "had been a great hunter and woodsman," who claimed to have killed two hundred deer and eighty

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James Fenimore Cooper, The Pioneers, intro. Donald A. Ringe (New York: Penguin Books; 1988), p. 369 on "skirts," p. 97; on "new parts," p. 160; and on "the law of the mountains," the "wilderness," and its law, pp. 293-294; 344, 365. On p. 34 Cooper speaks of military service on "the frontiers" in past conflicts, but I have been unable to find in that novel the quote cited by Andro Linklater, or any other, in which Bumppo uses "frontier" in any sense.

bears “in a single season,” and who nine years earlier had been compelled to take up “an agricultural life.”<sup>152</sup>

Equally interesting, the subjects of Cooper’s novel dealing with colonial “frontier” conflicts are not “frontiersmen” but, like the inhabitants of the Anglo-Scottish frontier region, “borderers.”<sup>153</sup> Indeed, Cooper was hardly alone in this respect and as a matter of fact, a large part of the original settlers of Appalachia were in fact drawn from the infamous Anglo-Scottish Borders or from the militant settlers of Protestant Ulster.<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, as pointed out earlier, the trans-Appalachian was in fact more a borderland and zone than a more or less fixed line of settlement. Teddy Roosevelt recognized this full well later when he penned his account of Lord Dunmore’s Indian War. In this he argues that by 1774 “the frontiersmen had planted themselves firmly” in the Alleghenies of Virginia, and so inhabited what he calls a “border country” (not a “frontier”). In this manner Roosevelt, unlike Turner, recognizes the full strength and power of aboriginal opposition to advances into the Wilderness beyond the mountains; explicitly accepts that this region was a contested borderland, not open free land; and usually, and rightly,

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<sup>152</sup>

“A Trip Along Zanes Trace: Selections from Fortescue Cumming’s Travel Book, 1807,” pp. 118-119.

<sup>153</sup>

James Fenimore Cooper, The Borderers; or, the Heathcotes. A Romance of Prairie Life (London: George Routledge and Sons, n.d.). In 1897 the early French and Indian Wars on this the “Northeastern Frontier” of New England still were seen as “border” conflicts; see S.A. Drake, The Border Wars of New England, commonly called King William's and Queen Anne's Wars.

<sup>154</sup>

D.H. Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America, pp. 621-632.

prefers to call the settlers involved “borderers.”<sup>155</sup> So if critics accuse Turner of treating aboriginal opposition to the advancing settlers as incidental to the chronicle of his triumphant “frontier,” the same is certainly not true Roosevelt. In his heroic saga of the “Winning of the West,” he recognizes that the “forest tribes were exceedingly formidable opponents” who ravaged the “borders,” and he adds that “it is not too much to say that they formed a far more serious obstacle to the American advance than would have been offered by an equal number of the best European troops.”<sup>156</sup>

However, the distinction between the “frontier” and the movement west of pioneers is made most explicitly in Francis Parkman’s account of the opening of his journey across the Oregon Trail in 1846. On arriving by steamer at the landing that served Independence, Kansas, he observed signs of “the great western movement” in the “parties of emigrants, with their tents and wagons,” as well as mountain men, traders and visiting Indians. Here, at “the extreme frontier of the Missouri,” they all were readying to push forward into Indian territory. Their trek was to take them past nearby Fort Leavenworth, defended by two blockhouses but no stockade, and then westward, usually along either the Santa Fe or the Oregon Trail. But by so doing, Parkman makes it clear that they were passing beyond the frontier, the edge of which was represented by the

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T. Roosevelt, The Winning of the West, I, pp. 149-164. Others, however, do refer to this region as Virginia’s “western frontier;” see, for example, J. Doddridge, Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars, pp. 170-171.

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T. Roosevelt, The Winning of the West, 2, p. 236. He also notes (p. 238) occasions when his backwoodsmen “had been beaten by the Ohio tribes and the Cherokees, the border ravaged, and the settlements stopped or forced back.”

Leavenworth outpost. He and his companions, he tells us, “resolved to remain one day at Fort Leavenworth, and on the next to bid a final adieu to the frontier; or in the phraseology of the region, to ‘jump off.’”<sup>157</sup>

If soldiers therefore left the East to join “the army on the frontier,” the pioneer-settler-farmer almost always had set off to make new homes or fortunes first in “the Wilderness” or “Prairie” that stretched beyond the “frontier,” initially from the Appalachians to the Ohio, and then on westward to the Mississippi, or, more generally, just “in the West.”<sup>158</sup> That barrier reached, they then sought to push west of that river and “beyond the broad Missouri,” but first only as a means of reaching Oregon and gold-rich California. Consequently, the territory between the “Mississippi-Missouri frontier,” on which the city of St. Louis served as the “Gateway to the West” in the east, for nearly two decades remained separated from the Americans’ Pacific Territories by what Stephen Long had termed in 1820 the “Great American Desert” of the Western Plains. In his view, the trans-Missouri country that stretched to the Rockies was “almost wholly

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Francis Parkman, Jr., The Oregon Trail (New York: Penguin Books; 1985), pp. 38-39, 57. Again, a century later historian Bernard De Voto used the term in precisely the same way. Discussing the common knowledge about the West available in St. Louis in the early 1830s, he records that “[s]everal hundred men left the Missouri frontier every spring for Santa Fe, the Yellowstone, South Pass, the Green the Columbia...” (Italics mine -- DRJ); Bernard De Voto, Across the Wide Missouri (Boston: Houghton Mifflin; 1947), p. 5. John Keegan, Warpaths, pp. 265-271, provides a portrait of the Leavenworth region and its later traditions.

<sup>158</sup>

It is worth noting that after 1893 even Turner “repeatedly interchanged ‘West’ and ‘frontier’ in his writings; ... he defined either term as the whim of the moment directed;” Ray Allen Billington, The American Frontier, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: American Historical Association; 1965), p. 12.

unfit for cultivation, and of course uninhabitable by a people depending on agriculture for their subsistence. Although tracts of fertile land considerably extensive are occasionally to be met with, yet the scarcity of wood and water, almost universally prevalent, will prove an insuperable obstacle in the way of settling the country.”

However, in Long’s view this meant that this same extensive region was excellently suited to provide a military frontier zone. Thus he wrote that this “region may prove of infinite importance to the United States, inasmuch as it is calculated to serve as a barrier to prevent too great an extension of our population westward, and secure us against the machinations or incursions of an enemy.”<sup>159</sup> Thanks to the rise of American power in the Pacific Northwest and in California, this “desert” was first explored and then crossed by the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails. Yet it was only eventually, thanks to the state of agricultural technology, that settler-farmers began to settle “on the prairie.”

Consequently, the advance of an agriculture “settlement frontier” paused during these years and was only gradually resumed in the wake of the incursions of the buffalo hunters, cowboys, miners and, perhaps most importantly, the railway men.<sup>160</sup>

Otherwise, the pioneers met by Parkman in Kansas in 1846 were from the next generation, yet they appear surprisingly similar to those just discussed. He noted that those making “this strange migration” were a motley bunch comprised of “very sober-

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<sup>159</sup>

Stephen Harriman Long, Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rockies (1823) as quoted in P.E. Cohen, Mapping the West, p. 108.

<sup>160</sup>

See the maps and commentaries in Ibid., pp. 117-176.

looking countrymen,” as well as “some of the vilest outcasts in the country.”<sup>161</sup> With the discovery of gold in California in 1848 and “rush” of 1849, both the numbers and diversity of the migrants rose sharply. As one contemporary proverb put it: “If hell lay to the West, ... Americans would cross heaven to reach it.”<sup>162</sup> But whatever their motives, Parkman wrote, “whether an insane hope of a better condition of life, or a desire of shaking off restraints of law and society, or mere restlessness, certain it is that multitudes bitterly repent the journey, and after they have reached the land of promise, are happy to escape from it.”<sup>163</sup> Many others, of course, did succeed in putting down roots in the newly settled lands, but they were usually not paupers seeking to reverse their fortunes. As another observer warned some thirty years later with regard to the drifting Negro freedmen: “For abject poverty, ... there is no more unpromising refuge than the Western frontier.”<sup>164</sup>

This brings us back to the term “frontier.” As this last comment demonstrates, the generally restricted use of the term did not prevent observers from recognizing that there was a close, not to say symbiotic, relationship between the advance of the line of

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<sup>161</sup>

F. Parkman, Oregon Trail, pp. 42-43.

<sup>162</sup>

M.B. Davidson, Life in America, i, p. 157.

<sup>163</sup>

F. Parkman, Oregon Trail, pp. 42-43.

<sup>164</sup>

Henry King, “A Year of the Exodus in Kansas,” Scribner’s Monthly: An Illustrated Magazine for the People, 20 (May-Oct. 1880), p. 217. This was one of the few early comments found to explicitly link settlement with the term “frontier.”



settlement created by the Westward Movement, and that of the army's "military frontier." It was the first that continually pushed, and sometimes pulled, the military into establishing new lines of forts and outposts, and simultaneously forced the soldiers into repressing still additional groups of freshly despoiled, furious and usually desperate Amerindians.<sup>165</sup> In the eyes of Turner, Roosevelt and others of the day, even those sympathetic to the dispossessed natives included, this was a "natural" and inevitable process. "At the bottom lay one irritating cause of all the Indian wars from that day [1689] to this [1897], never to be removed except by the final subjugation of one or the other race," wrote the historian of New England's "border wars" four years after Turner's paper. "By the rapid growth and steady extension of English [and Anglo-American] settlements, peace was working the downfall of the natives even more certainly than war, for just as the wild grasses are eradicated by the cultivated sorts, so slowly but surely, step by step, the red man was being thrust back into the wilderness. Under such conditions," he concluded, "little provocation was needed to fan the smouldering embers into a flame"<sup>166</sup> and, as a result, bring a further advance of the "military frontier.

In turn, this process encouraged the loose use of "frontier" as a shorthand term for the

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For an excellent case study of the dynamics of army-pioneer (in this case largely miners) interactions, and their impact on the Amerindians, see Dee Brown, Fort Phil Kearny: An American Saga (1962), later reissued as The Fetterman Massacre (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska-Bison Books; c. 2003).

<sup>166</sup>S.A. Drake, The Border Wars of New England, p. 9.

most distant areas of pioneer settlement in the West -- a practice possibly encouraged by the incorporation of extensive lands inhabited by Spanish-speakers along the American southern border. Whatever the case, the use of “frontier” to signify an area of border settlement, as opposed to a line of border forts and fortified settlements along the border of a no-man’s-land, first apparently entered the world of American letters around 1870.<sup>167</sup> Even so, its use in this sense now gained currency only slowly before Turner advanced his thesis in 1893 and it seem obvious that this timing was not coincidental. Given the intertwined histories of the military frontier and westward flow of pioneers into so-called “empty” territory, it is no accident that they came to a simultaneous finish with two superficially unrelated events in 1890: the massacre of the Sioux at Wounded Knee and the census that sparked a report by the United States Census Bureau that there no longer existed any clear boundary between settled and unsettled lands.<sup>168</sup> Yet as Turner himself points out, even the government’s Census Bureau now saw its “frontier

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The Oxford English Dictionary. Compact Edition (Oxford: Oxford University; 1972), p. 1086, credits Ralph Waldo Emerson with being the first recorded author to use frontier in this manner in his lecture “Civilization,” in Society and Solitude (1870). He did so in referring to the speed with which a piano would appear in a settler’s “frontier house.”

<sup>168</sup>

Recent accounts of the events at Wounded Knee include Roger L. Di Silvestro, In the Shadow of Wounded Knee: The Untold Final Story of the Indian Wars (New York: Walker & Co.; 2005), and Larry McMurry, Oh What a Slaughter: Massacres in the American West, 1846-1890 (New York: Simon & Schuster; 2005), pp. 135-156. The census report is discussed with regard to the map issued by the government’s General Land Office, also issued in 1890, in P.E. Cohen, Mapping the West, pp. 201-203. J. Keegan, Warpaths, p. 332, also notes the coincidence of the defeat of the Indian Ghost Dance and the Census Bureau’s report.

of settlement” as line, or boundary, and not an area or zone.<sup>169</sup> As a result, the way was clear for a new vision of the recent past in which the Westward Movement and military frontier could be conflated into an ideal frontier of pioneer settlement to help invigorate the new nationalist confidence felt by most Americans.

Before examining the nature of Turner’s synthesis below, I want to stress once again that not only does the term “frontier” appears surprisingly rarely in literary-historical works written before the 1870s, and indeed before the 1890s, but this is true even in works devoted to the so-called “Indian Wars.” And when it is used, this term almost always still refers to a boundary or border zone, and echoes the above mentioned address of the Pennsylvania Assembly and other colonial documents. Thus one historian of 1850 records that in 1644 “the Indians commenced their operations along the entire line of the frontier” of Virginia, that in 1763 the Ohio tribes simultaneously struck “the forts occupied by the English on the frontiers of their new territory,” and that in 1764 they planned to “again ravage the frontiers.”<sup>170</sup> Another history of 1858 refers to “the

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In a bulletin on the census of 1890, the Superintendent of the Census Bureau wrote: “Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent, its westward movement, etc., it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports;” as quoted in F.J. Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” p. 1 and in Ray Allen Billington, ed., The Frontier Thesis: Valid Interpretation of American History? (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston; 1966), p. 10.

<sup>170</sup>

William V. Moore, Indian Wars of the United States from the Discovery to the Present Time.... (Philadelphia, PA: W.A. Leary; 1851), pp. 110, 211, 213, 215. To a large extent, this usage appears to have been a literary convention.

atrocities of the Indians and Tories, especially on frontiers,” in 1779, and credits American punitive expeditions with intimidating “the savages,” even if they did not afford complete security to the western frontier,” or border.<sup>171</sup> Even in 1880 border warfare remained the only context in which “frontier” appeared in one popular historical text, and then with regard to the War of 1812 alone; the term is completely absent from the subsequent account of the Westward Movement and its associated Indian Wars.<sup>172</sup> More surprising still, a standard grammar-school history textbook of 1911 (still used in 1921) virtually ignores the term “frontier” even in discussions of the French and Indian War, the Revolution and the War of 1812.<sup>173</sup> Equally interesting, its author refers to Andrew Jackson not as a “frontier” hero, but as “a rough old backwoodsman” and, although allowing he was born “on the frontier” of North Carolina, dubs him a

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J.A. Spenser, History of the United States from the Earliest Period to the Administration of James Buchanan, 3 vols. (New York: Johnson, Fry and Co.; 1858), ii, pp. 51, 54, 293.

172

A.S. Barnes, A Brief History of the United States (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co.; 1880), p. 165. Charles Morris’ Famous Men and Great Events of the Nineteenth Century (Philadelphia, PA, and Toronto, Ont.: John C. Winston; 1899), in discussing “The Expansion of United States, notes “the entry into Mexican Texas of “American frontiersmen, of the kind calculated foment trouble” (p. 357), but not the “frontier.” He also ignores this term in his discussion of American “democratic institutions” (pp. 361-368), but mentions the “frontier” as moving “onward in giant strides” in his chapter on “The Indian in the Nineteenth Century” (p. 471). Numerous other examples could be cited in which the term is employed in the same sense of “borderland,” and equally rarely as a particular line of settlement. This also is true of major literary journals such as the National Magazine and Scribner’s Monthly.

173

Marguerite Stockman Dickson, American History for Grammar Schools (New York: Macmillan; 1911, 1921), pp. 123-150, 172-243, 294-313.

“mountaineer.”<sup>174</sup>

### **Turner and His Frontier**

Rather than precision in defining his frontier, Turner was concerned with its utility as a means of explaining and asserting “American exceptionalism.” This was his proposition that not only was the young United States different from other Western nations in that the republic had had a unique process of social evolution. The prevailing view at the time of Turner’s paper of 1893 is known as the “germ theory.” Turner himself had been exposed to this while attending the seminars of Herbert Baxter Adams at Johns Hopkins University. This theory traced the roots of American democratic institutions back to Germanic tribal institutions which had been translated to the New World in the ideas which the first settlers had brought with them from England (later Great Britain).<sup>175</sup> Long dissatisfied with this explanation, Turner hoped that in advancing his own theory of the frontier he could demonstrate convincingly that the American character and culture resulted from the effects of environment and experience rather than its Germanic-Anglo

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<sup>174</sup>

Ibid., pp. 309-329.

<sup>175</sup>

It is interesting that some seven decades later, the Canadian social-philosopher George Grant advanced his own “germ” in the form of “Calvinist Protestantism.” He sees the North American “primal” as being “the meeting of the alien and yet conquerable land with English-speaking Protestants,” and argues that this, in the long run, promoted capitalism and with it, technology; see George Grant, Technology and Empire, as reprinted in Arthur Davis and Henry Roper, eds., Collected Works of George Grant, 4 vols. (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 2005), 3: 1960-1969, pp. 484-485.

heritage.<sup>176</sup> As Gerald Nash puts it, he was “not so much an academician in an ivory tower as he was a publicist who explained to Americans who they were, and how they became a nation.” As an “important interpreter of American identity,” Turner therefore was not only an historian but also “a poet, prophet, philosopher and master teacher.” So if his explanation of the “totality of the national experience“ was at times “somewhat vague and imprecise, that only added to the mystique of his interpretation”<sup>177</sup> of what the social critic Max Lerner calls the translation of “the history of the moving frontier into terms of the civilization process and ... the history of an extended genesis.”<sup>178</sup>

Clearly, then, Turner believed that in the frontier he had uncovered the mechanism responsible for the distinctive individualism of an American national character which he believed had emerged, or perhaps escaped, from the constraining institutions and attitudes of the Old World. Explaining “the distinguishing feature of American life” in

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On Turner and the “germ theory” see W. Coleman, “Science and Symbol in the Turner Hypothesis,” pp. 25-27.

<sup>177</sup>

Gerald D. Nash, “The Frontier Thesis: A Historical Perspective,” Journal of the West, 34 (October 1995), No. 4, pp. 7-9. For a more extended discussion see Martin Ridge, “The Life of an Idea: The Significance of Frederick Jackson Turner’s Frontier Thesis,” Montana: The Magazine of Western History, 41 (Winter 1991), pp. 2-13. As a teacher Turner led “one of the most famous graduate seminars of his day” and apart from Herbert Eugene Bolton (discussed below) his students included such prominent historians as Carl Becker, Merle Curti, Samuel Flagg Bemis, and Frederick Merk, among others; see William Cronon, “Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner,” The Western Historical Quarterly, 18 (April 1987), No. 2, 160-162.

<sup>178</sup>

Max Lerner, America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the United States Today (New York: Simon and Schuster; 1957), p. 36.

1893, he wrote:

....The peculiarity of American institutions is the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people -- to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life.... All peoples show development; the germ theory of politics has been sufficiently emphasized. In the case of most nations, however, the development has occurred in a limited area; and if the nation has expanded, it has met the other growing peoples whom it has conquered. But in the case of the United States we have a different phenomenon. Limiting our attention to the Atlantic coast, we have the familiar phenomenon of the evolution of institutions in a limited area, such as the rise of representative government;....But we have in addition to this a recurrence of the process of evolution in each western area reached in the process of expansion. Thus American development has exhibited not merely [an] advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area. American social development has been continually beginning over again on the frontier. This perennial rebirth, this fluidity of American life, this expansion westward with its new opportunities, its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, furnish the forces dominating American character. The true point of view in the history of this nation is not the Atlantic coast, it is the Great West....<sup>179</sup>

More important still for Turner's theory was his view of the moving frontier as being "the line of the most rapid and effective Americanization." Initially, when it "was the Atlantic coast," he recognized it as being "the frontier of Europe in a very real sense." But as it slowly moved westwards, it became increasingly American as a consequence of the colonists' interaction with the Wilderness. As Turner saw it, the latter

masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays

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F.J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," pp. 2-3.

him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs an Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick; he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion. In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows Indian trails. Little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe, not simply the development of Germanic germs, any more than the first phenomenon was a case of reversion to the Germanic mark. The fact is, that here is a new product that is American...."

As a result, "the advance of the frontier has meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, a steady growth of independence on American lines...."<sup>180</sup>

In time, Turner and his followers also went on to identify a series of successive "frontiers" -- those of exploration, fur-trading, mining, lumbering, settlement-agricultural and urbanization -- as the maturing American nation pushed its way across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Since Turner saw this as a process in which "successive terminal moraines result from successive glaciations," he believed that "each frontier leaves its traces behind it, and when it becomes a settled area the region still partakes of the frontier characteristics."<sup>181</sup> But since these terminal moraines

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Ibid., pp. 3-4. Also see the comments of the Sinologist Owen Lattimore on this passage in his "The Frontier in History," in O. Lattimore, Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers, 1929-1958 (Oxford: Oxford University; 1962), p. 489.

<sup>181</sup>

F.J. Turner, "Significance of the Frontier for American History," p. 4. For Turner's subsequent development of his thesis, and the views of his disciples and opponents, see Ray Allen Billington, ed., The Frontier Thesis: Valid Interpretation of American History? and that same author's pamphlet, The American Frontier, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: American Historical Association; 1965). I should note that a number of secondary and hotly debated aspects of Turner's frontier (for example, its role as a "safety valve" that reduced the volume of social radicalism) are not considered in the following



were never identical, this frontier process brought "sectional" differentiation within the young nation (a model also explored by some Canadian historians), as well as a new, assertive democratic spirit.<sup>182</sup>

Despite this image of glaciation, William Coleman argues that Turner's overriding metaphor is not geological, but biological. He points out that "it was the "metaphor of the social organism" that "provided the central theme of the frontier thesis." Like many other thinkers in the post-Darwinist 1890s, Turner had "transferred a biological mechanism of change to the realm of human society and historical development," and both the "vocabulary of the Turnerian argument and its conceptual content parallel closely the major themes of evolutionary human geography." In Turner's view, Coleman argues, it was the impact of the frontier as a new environment, "in patently biological terms," on the American "social organism" that "virtually created the American nation," while the superimposition of "the symbol of the forest" or Wilderness "infused the entire conception of the frontier with a persuasive but uncloying romantic sensibility."<sup>183</sup>

These comments underline an additional point that deserves attention before we leave Turner's own writings. This concerns his basically environmental argument that this

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discussion.

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On Canadian interest in the "frontier" see Michael S. Cross, The Frontier Thesis and the Canadas: The Debate on the Impact of the Canadian Environment (Toronto: Copp Clark; 1970), and J.M.S. Careless, Frontier and Metropolis: Regions, Cities, and Identities in Canada before 1914 (Toronto: University of Toronto; 1989).

<sup>183</sup>

W. Coleman, "Science and Symbol in the Turner Frontier Hypothesis," pp. 22-25.

American cultural transformation was facilitated by the freer atmosphere of the "open" agricultural or "settlement" frontiers of the New World, which were made possible thanks to plentiful reserves of "free" land. Although we will return to this issue below, here I would point out that as movie fans know full well, even in the West the frontier was never "open" in the sense that American expansion was uncontested by earlier inhabitants.<sup>184</sup> Yet despite his own admission that each push beyond a "terminal moraine" of his frontier involved "Indian wars," Turner's concept of "free" land in fact meant unoccupied land. Or as Walter Prescott Webb later conceded: "Inherent in the American concept of a moving frontier is the idea of a body of free land which can be had for the taking."<sup>185</sup> In this light his inclusion of the Indian Territory within his frontier has an ominous significance.

This is especially the case since he described his frontier as the moving line between settled regions and a virtually unpopulated wilderness, and justified its advance as that of "the meeting point between savagery and civilization."<sup>186</sup> In light of the Social-Darwinist and ethnocentric mentality of the day, such a formulation is hardly surprising.

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On this point see Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, "Comparative Frontier History," in H. Lamar and L. Thompson, eds., The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1981), pp. 4-5, and the comments of J.M.S. Careless, Frontier and Metropolis, pp. 38-39.

<sup>185</sup>

Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Frontier, intro. Arnold J. Toynbee (Austin: University of Texas; 1953, 1964), p. 3.

<sup>186</sup>

F.J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," p. 10.

Even so, by belittling the pre-existing, aboriginal inhabitants as mere savages, Turner clearly excluded the “Indians from any role in the frontier's formation or function,” as the classicist C.R. Whittaker puts it. In his view “Turner's vision ... was almost totally ethnocentric,” and it “was as though the native population had not been present.”

Whittaker insists that this “omission flaws the basic description of the process, since it was through interaction, not military advance, that the frontier crystallized, and it was the American whites who to a large extent defined the political development of the Indians.”<sup>187</sup>

This last point aside, this same “omission” also violates modern concepts of justice and leaves this aspect of his thesis open to the attacks of later critics.<sup>188</sup> In 1980, for example, Robert Berkhofer remarked that “Turner’s approach to American history in general and to the frontier in particular,” was again being seriously questioned for two basic reasons. The first is that “the sequence of the stages of White settlement postulated that people actually moved westward in accordance with nineteenth-century social-evolutionary theory.” But today, he continued, we not only “deny that American

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<sup>187</sup>

C.R. Whittaker, Frontiers of the Roman Empire, p. 5.

<sup>188</sup>

As H. Lamar and L. Thompson, “Comparative Frontier History,” p. 2, put it: “Turner and most of his successors have almost completely disregarded the fact that two societies were involved in the frontier process in North America: an indigenous Indian society as well as an intrusive European one.” Also see R.F. Berkhofer, Jr., The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Random House-Vintage Books; 1979), pp. 108-109, 155; and Alistair Hennessy, The Frontier in Latin American History (London: Edward Arnold; 1978), p. 43. For a “revisionist” view of the role of the Plains Indians, see J. Keegan, Warpaths, pp. 332-334.

expansion recapitulated the stages of human cultural evolution, but also we no longer believe in the idea of progress that is presumed by such an interpretation of human history.” Secondly, Turner's view of the frontier “solely in terms of sequences of white settlement is condemned as too ethnocentric, if not racist, in its neglect of nonwhite peoples, especially the First Americans, as settlers.” Berkhofer agrees with other critics in arguing that because of his faith “in the superiority of white progress and social evolution,” Turner “either excluded Indians and other races entirely from the stage of American history, or relegated them to minor roles in the grand drama of settling the continent.” For this reason his conception is rightly criticized “for resting upon too narrow a definition of who produced and participated in the frontier process (-es).”<sup>189</sup>

In all fairness to Turner, he was not the only scholar and publicist at that time to propose such views. Despite this, the controversies that soon swirled around his concept of frontier indicate that even the relatively unified intellectual environment of his day did not necessarily guarantee a consensus.<sup>190</sup> This last was hindered by Turner himself, since

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R.L. Berkhofer, Jr, "North American Frontier as Process and Context," pp. 43-44.

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William Coleman, "Science and Symbol in the Turner Frontier Hypothesis," pp. 27-47. Aspects of American social thought and the general intellectual milieu of in which Turner wrote are outlined Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform from Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 1955), and Morton White, Social Thought in America: The Revolt Against Formalism (Boston: Beacon Press; 1957). One earlier, similar presentation of the American character and implications of the end of the frontier (though this term is not used) is Charles Dudley Warner's paper "The Western Man," read before the Psi Upsilon Convention at Michigan University on 26 May 1880, and published in Scribner's Monthly, 20 (August 1880), No. 4, 549-552). Interestingly enough, Turner himself also described his independent and self-made frontiersman as "the Western man;" see his "The Problem of the West," Atlantic Monthly, 78

he was far from consistent in his presentations. According to one later commentator, he seemingly used his concept in three different senses: as the condition of existing at the edge of settlement of an “unused” or “uninhabited” area of land; as a geographical region; and as a process of adaption.<sup>191</sup> Another notes that the master often infuriated critics by the way “he repeatedly interchanged ‘West’ and ‘frontier’ in his writings” while, “to their despair he defined either term as the whim of the moment directed.” In fact, for Turner the “frontier” at one time might be

“the meeting ground between savagery and civilization;” at another it might become the “temporary boundary of an expanding society at the edge of substantially free lands,” or “a migrating region,” a “form of society,” a “state of mind,” a “stage of society rather than place,” a “process,” “the hither edge of free land,” the “line of most rapid and effective Americanization,” the “region whose social conditions resulted from the application of older institutions and ideas to the transforming influences of free land,” or “the graphic line which records the expanding energies of the people behind it.” On still other occasions he accepted the census bureau's definition and considered the frontier to be the advanced zone where the population ranged from six to two persons to square mile. “I have,” Turner admitted in [a letter to John C. Parish of 14 April] 1926, “never published an adequate discussion of this phase of the 'frontier.’”<sup>192</sup>

In the final analysis, however, this failure is less significant than his recognition of the relationship between the shifting line of settlement with the formal military frontier, as well as his nomination of the Westward Movement in particular as the engine driving his theory, along with his conclusions on its

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(September 1896), 289-297.

<sup>191</sup>

A. Hennessy, The Frontier in Latin American History, p. 16.

<sup>192</sup>

R.A. Billington, The American Frontier, p. 12.

overall role in the formation of the American nation.

### **Elaborations and Comments**

Of the contributions made by Turner's students, one of the most fundamental and lasting additions to his thesis was made by Herbert Eugene Bolton (1870-1953). In studying Spain's colonies running from East Florida along the Gulf Coast, and then north of present Mexico to California, he proposed the concept of the "borderland" -- a region in which two advancing imperial frontiers come into contact, and often conflict.<sup>193</sup> In fact, what was perhaps the earliest war in recorded history comprised a series of battles waged by Ur and a neighbour over just such a border region in ancient Sumer.<sup>194</sup> Yet imperial and local conflicts aside, we observed in colonial America that the diverse inhabitants within such borderland regions often reach accommodations with each other and end by developing border cultures that differ from those of any of the original imperial powers.

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Bolton first presented his revision of Turner in his The Spanish Borderlands: A Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest (New Haven: Yale University; 1921), which appeared as volume 26 of the series "Chronicles of America." On his subsequent influence see John Francis Bannon, The Spanish Borderland Frontier, 1513-1821 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston; 1970), pp. 2-3, 239, 257-258. More recent assessments are Michael C. Scardaville, "Approaches to the Study of the Southeastern Borderlands," in R. Reid Badger and Lawrence A. Clayton, eds., Alabama and the Borderlands from Prehistory to Statehood (University, AL: University of Alabama; 1985), pp. 184-196, 218-222; and David J. Weber "Turner, the Boltonians, and Spanish Borderlands," in his Myth and the History of the Hispanic Southwest: Essays (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico; 1988), pp. 33-54.

<sup>194</sup>

On this first recorded "border war," see C.J. Gadd, "The Cities of Babylonia," The Cambridge Ancient History, rev. ed., I, Chapter 13, published separately (Cambridge: Cambridge University; 1962), pp. 27-29.

Thus far our discussion of frontier theory has focused on the American “West,” the locus of Turner’s studies. Yet others have sought to apply his concept still more widely. In the 1950s Walter Prescott Webb, initially a student of the Great Plains frontier, argued that North America was merely one part of early modern Europe’s “Great Frontier” of exploration, commerce and settlement, a frontier that ended with the creation of Spanish, Portuguese, English, French and Dutch global empires, the formation of the United States, and the creation of an era of prosperity that only ended with the Great Depression of 1929. Most important from a theoretical point of view was his adoption of the term “metropolis” for western Europe’s position vis-a-vis the frontier, and his definition of the later as “not a line to stop at, but an area inviting entrance.” In addition, he argued that the “concept of a moving frontier is applicable where a civilized people are advancing into a wilderness, an unsettled area, or one sparsely populated by a primitive people,” and he consequently agreed completely with Turner that the term “frontier” itself had very different connotations for Americans than it did for the Europeans.<sup>195</sup>

Owen Lattimore, the celebrated American student of “Inner Asian” frontiers, meanwhile developed an “ecological-materialist” precept which held that “every society tries to establish frontiers that conform to its own characteristics.” In line with this, he argues that expanding societies encroach successfully only in regions that can support

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Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Frontier, pp. 8-13, 2-3. For a major critique see Geoffrey Barraclough, published a major critique, “Metropolis and Macrocosm,” in Past and Present, 3 (1954), No. 5, 77-93, and Peter Marshall then criticized both Barraclough and Webb in his “The Great Frontier,” Ibid., 3 (1954), No. 7, pp. 55-62. The implications of Webb’s study are discussed further in chapter 5 below.

the already established styles and patterns of their economic activities and production.

Otherwise, he suggests that a

frontier is created when a community occupies a territory. From then on a frontier is changed and shaped by the activity and growth of the community, or by the impact on it of another community. History being composed of records of growth, it is the changing of frontiers by the social growth of communities that is of primary importance for the historian.

Although he recognized that frontiers might “be classified in many different ways,”

Lattimore held that for historians two types were of special interest: “the frontier

between two communities that are of the same kind” and “the frontier between different kinds of community.” And in either case Lattimore stressed that frontiers are porous and

the sites of legal trade, smuggling and cultural interchanges.<sup>196</sup>

Historian William H. McNeill argues that another “open frontier,” or series of “open frontiers,” long existed in East-Central Europe. He calls this the “Steppe Frontier,” which in time became more akin to a series of contested borderlands. Their conquest eventually carried the Russian flag to the Black Sea and Caucasus in the south, and eastwards through Siberia and Central Asia to the Himalayas, Manchuria, the Pacific, and in the 1700s on to Alaska and south to San Francisco as well.<sup>197</sup>

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The development of Lattimore's concept can be traced in the essays collected in his Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers, 1928-1958. The quotes are from pp. 29 and 469.

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William H. McNeill, Europe's Steppe Frontier, 1500-1800 (Chicago: University of Chicago; 1964). On Russia's expansion into Siberia, see George V. Lantseff and Richard A. Pierce, Eastward to Empire: Exploration and Expansion on the Russian Open Frontier to 1750 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University; 1973), and for the later period, Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini, eds., Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands



Apart from McNeill, medievalists on both sides of the Atlantic frequently apply the frontier concept to a range of regions in and near Europe proper. Among these last are England's Welsh, Scottish and Irish "marches" or borderlands, the "marks" and Crusader lands of the Baltic and Poland, most of Central Europe and the Balkans, Eastern Anatolia and even the Christian kingdoms of "Crusader" Palestine. In particular, students of medieval Spain have found the concept helpful in discussing both the Reconquista before 1492, and the subsequent export of "frontier" institutions (such as livestock ranching) to Spanish America. Not surprisingly, historians of Latin America have followed suit, as have their colleagues in all parts of Africa and far-off Australia.<sup>198</sup> So Turner and the American "frontiersmen" aside, a vast literature clearly exists to serve as a basis for "comparative frontier studies."<sup>199</sup> And this, in the eyes of many, makes the

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and Peoples, 1700-1917 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 1997). McNeill later returned to frontier theme in a more general and metaphoric manner in his The Great Frontier: Freedom and Hierarchy in Modern Times (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University; 1983).

<sup>198</sup>

A representative selection of essays, as well as a comprehensive bibliography on all aspects of Medieval frontier history, is provided by Robert Bartlett and Angus MacKay, eds., Medieval Frontier Societies (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1989). On Spain, see Derek W. Lomax, The Reconquest of Spain (London: Longman; 1978). The other regions are discussed in Billington, The American Frontier, 36-37; Igor Kopytoff, ed., The African Frontier (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 1987); Alistair Hennessy, The Frontier in Latin American History; H. Lamar and L. Thompson, The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared; and H.C. Allen, Bush and Backwoods: A Comparison of the Frontier in Australia and the United States (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University; 1954); among others.

<sup>199</sup>

For a useful if now somewhat outdated discussion of this issue see L. Thompson and H. Lamar, "Comparative Frontier History," pp. 3-13. Their views are discussed in greater detail below.

issue of precise definitions appear more urgent than ever.

### **Billington Restates Turner**

Clearly then, Turner's works, like those of Sigmund Freud and other contemporary intellectual innovators in other fields,<sup>200</sup> left his disciples with a spectrum of diverse definitions and interpretations on just what a frontier is, and just how and when a frontier ceases to be such. Even in the United States, where it might seem to be fairly easy to identify the frontier as a "cutting edge between settled and unsettled land," we are left -- as the above list of Turner's own definitions suggests -- with a number of ambiguities and in considerable confusion.<sup>201</sup> Since there exists an extensive literature on Turner and his theories, there is no need for a another detailed discussion here of all aspects of his frequently revised theory, or of the writings of his numerous students, disciples and many critics. Instead, we will examine the summary and evaluation of Turner's thesis that was presented in 1965 by his intellectual biographer, Ray Allen Billington,<sup>202</sup> augmented by the views of a handful of other, later commentators.

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The fate of Freud's theories in the hands of his followers is usefully summarized in J.A.C. Brown, Freud and the Post-Freudians (Harmondsworth, Mddlx: Penguin; 1961).

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A. Hennessy, The Frontier in Latin American History, p. 16. He points out that this settled-unsettled line is inappropriate when applied to South America. There the continent was dotted with small communities by 1600, and while subsequent immigration served to fill in some of the empty spaces between them, it still remains a continent of "pioneer fringes."

202

R.A. Billington, The American Frontier, p. 12. For his view of Turner the man, see his Frederick Jackson Turner: Historian, Scholar, Teacher (New York: Oxford University; 1973) .

Billington seeks to restate Turner's theory in such a way as to make it "useable in a modern interpretation of American history." As a first step, he sets out to define frontier more precisely, a task which Turner himself had avoided. After reviewing the master's varied usage, Billington suggests that two basic definitions are required. The first sees the frontier as a place or geographic area, and the second views the frontier as a process.<sup>203</sup> In the first case, a frontier as "a place can be defined as 'a geographic region adjacent to the unsettled portions of the continent, in which a low man-land ratio and unusually abundant natural resources provided an exceptional opportunity for the small-property individual to advance himself economically and socially.'" This suggests that the frontier "was not a line but a migrating zone of varying width, peopled by the variety of types needed to transform a wilderness into a civilization."<sup>204</sup>

Billington's second definition sees the frontier as "the process through which individuals and their institutions were altered by contact with a social environment which provided a unique opportunity for self-advancement through the exploitation of relatively unused natural resources...." It further implies, Billington continues, "that the social devolution and evolution occurring within this zone varied with time and place depending on the nature of both the individuals entering the region and the environment

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<sup>203</sup>

Some thirteen years later, Alistair Hennessy only added the more psychological third definition (listed above) — "the condition of existing on the edge of settlement" — to Billington's two; see his The Frontier in Latin America (1978), p. 16.

<sup>204</sup>

R.A. Billington, The American Frontier, p. 13. In this sense the "frontier" resembles more recent conceptions of the "backcountry."

awaiting them there."<sup>205</sup> Thus, Billington concludes, "the frontier was actually a broad, westward-moving zone, in which a variety of individuals were applying a number of skills to the conquest of nature, unmindful of any orderly pattern that later theorists might expect to find in the evolution of society."<sup>206</sup>

On this basis, Billington deals with the claims of Turner and his disciples that the frontier experience was a major factor in "the emergence of a distinctly American brand of democracy, nationalism, and individualism," and examines the extent to which it "helped alter certain traits" exhibited by Americans. They all argued that "partly as a result of their frontier heritage," their fellow countrymen "were unusually inventive, uniquely mobile in both the geographic and social sense, thoroughly materialistic, and so prejudiced against the creative arts and abstract thought that their culture lagged behind that of Europe." While all these propositions were rigidly tested and modified by later scholars, Billington insists that most still "agree that basically the frontier played a role -- often a minor one -- in endowing the people of the United States with these

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<sup>205</sup>

Ibid. He adds (pp. 17-18) that later studies reveal that the migration process was "far more complex" than pictured by Turner. His "orderly procession of civilization, marching 'single file' westward" -- fur trapper, hunter, miner, cattle-raiser, pioneer farmer -- "omitted countless types essential to pioneering" such as soldiers, missionaries, lumbermen, land speculators, and so on. Furthermore, these frontiersmen do not "obey the laws of social evolution to which Turner subscribed; instead of advancing in an orderly procession as they subdued the wilderness they moved in a helter-skelter fashion that was as unreasonable as it was confusing." For some groups sought to use nature (like trappers, prospectors, herdsmen) and others to subdue nature (such as farmers, land speculators, town planners, and so on).

<sup>206</sup>

Ibid., p. 18.

distinguishing character traits.”<sup>207</sup>

More generally, Billington also claims it was not only in the United States that “democratic practices were strengthened, even though not originated, along the frontiers.” He points to other studies that “indicate that on every frontier imported practices were modified in the direction of recognizing greater equality and allowing a wider participation in governmental affairs.” The result, of course, was not necessarily the full democratization of inherited institutions” since “the degree of democracy resulting naturally varied with the base on which it rested.” To make this case, he refers to the histories of the frontiers of Russia and New France. In both cases, he argues, “the people did not enjoy a theoretical basis for freedom” such as the American colonists had inherited from England. As a result, Billington believes that the histories of those frontiers demonstrate “that both environmental and hereditary forces were needed to perpetuate democratic practices, just as that history proved that egalitarian land ownership patterns on all frontiers liberalized imported institutions.”<sup>208</sup>

Billington maintains that “recent studies of comparative frontiers” validate Turner's insight on their impact on institutions and character, and do “much to answer Turnerian

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<sup>207</sup>

*Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>208</sup>

*Ibid.*, pp. 24-25, 27-28. In this regard, Owen Lattimore argues that American institutions developed as they did as much “because of the institutions they had left behind them [such as a land-owning aristocracy and gentry] as well as those they brought with them, and not merely because of the free land and abundant raw materials of the frontier of new settlement....” This enabled them, “once they had thrown off their colonial disabilities, to move ahead in the same direction as the British, but even faster; see his “The Frontier in History,” p. 490.

critics.” Even so, he still admits that “[p]roponents of the frontier hypothesis can easily exaggerate the similarities between the experience of the United States and that of other countries.” If frontier pioneers elsewhere often failed to develop the same democracy and nationalist characteristics as those of the United States, this reflects the fact that Turner’s geographic frontier was much more than a borderland between settled and unsettled lands. Rather, it was an easily accessed area, rich in natural resources but with comparatively few inhabitants, that offered the newcomer an unusual opportunity to improve his conditions of life. Such frontiers, he argued, never “existed in countries that controlled the free movement of peoples, or in which resources were either lacking or required extensive capital outlay for exploitation.”<sup>209</sup>

By his definition, Billington continues, “the world areas providing a frontier-like opportunity are rigidly limited.” He believes that for a range of varying reasons, the “frontiers” identified in medieval Germany, Africa and Latin America failed to meet Turner’s requirements. Even in the cases of the Australian, Canadian and Russian-Siberian frontiers, “the differences between their pioneer-settlers on the one hand, and American frontiersmen on the other, “remained greater than the likenesses.” Even so, in Billington’s view “comparative studies still justify the generalization that imported institutions and traits were modified by the environment everywhere, and usually along roughly parallel lines.” Apart from bringing the above-mentioned liberalization of land laws and other similarities, in “most lands the pioneering experience fostered a sense of

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R.A. Billington, The American Frontier, pp. 35-36, 39.

racial superiority that found expression in subduing or eliminating the native populations, as well as a lusty nationalism which culminated in a sense of 'manifest destiny.'<sup>210</sup>

Billington gives Turner and his followers lower marks regarding their conclusions on the frontier's role in promoting the "melting pot," Americanization and nationalism. In their view, it was "the constant pressure of the Indian and alien enemies on the borderlands quickened western patriotism." Meanwhile, "commonly-shared problems created a bond between frontiersmen which served as a national unifying force," and a "mingling of peoples in the West diminished sectional loyalties." In addition, they argue that the settlers' demands for military protection (that is, for a "military frontier" of the traditional type), roads and other necessities "that only the federal government could provide led to a constant expansion of federal power." But for Turner, the most important aspect of his successive frontiers, or "Wests," was that they were "regions of rapid Americanization," or "melting pots where peoples from differing backgrounds were merged into one." In retrospect, Billington admits that this process of Americanization proved to be much more gradual than Turner believed. This was because the "alien groups that settled in ethnic pockets, rather than mingling with the earlier stocks, showed a surprising resistance to change as they clung to their old mores and value systems," and in some cases by his day, the mid-1960s, they still had not succumbed to the melting pot. So while most scholars accept that the frontier did

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Ibid., pp. 36-39.

promote a sense of nationalism, they argue it did so in a manner that differed considerably from Turner's theoretical model.<sup>211</sup>

One other point of Billington's deserving attention here is his assessment of the vaunted individualism and innovative spirit of Turner's frontiersmen. Turner saw the first as yet another by-product of the frontier experience, and Billington maintains that "modern scholarship" has recognized it "as a distinctive trait of Americans, but once more in a somewhat different form than originally supposed." He goes on to point out that by the 1930s leftist critics maintained that the West "was an area where co-operation was more essential than in the East" for such tasks as cabin-raising, defense against Indians, law enforcement, "and dozens of other necessary activities."<sup>212</sup> Charles and Mary Beard, for example, had charged that Turner "made individualism an interpretation of American history, by ignoring families and communities." This meant, they continued, that he dismissed the concept of "mutual aid" and instead traced "the secret of American uniqueness to the stoutest of all alleged individualists – the man of the frontier, as if there had been no women or families or communities or books or schools or churches there."<sup>213</sup>

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211

R.A. Billington, The American Frontier, pp. 26-27. Later studies also added that the care of "public lands" after 1789 to the forces promoting the Federal Government's activity, at the expense of that of the individual states, on the frontier.

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Ibid., pp. 27-28.

213

Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, A Basic History of the United States (New York: New Home Library; 1944), p. 362. Such "leftist" critics also accused him of ignoring the



When the influence of government assistance is added to this mix, opponents of the Turner school demand an explanation as to how such an environment could promote real individualism. As Billington indicates, however, later historians soon recognized that frontier co-operation was not incompatible with individualism, and that it gave a particular twist to the American character. On the one hand, the pioneer-frontiersman depended on his community and willingly solicited government aid when he felt the need. But on the other, Billington tells us, his “larger property stake in society” vis-a-vis that of the Easterner, along with the hope of acquiring even more land “as he utilized the unusual opportunities available in an expanding economy,” meant that “he was willing to adopt any expediency to improve his lot in life.” In other words, he “welcomed government aid when this was to his advantage, and protested government regulation when he thought this was to his disadvantage.” Writing in the mid-1960s Billington saw this as “the brand of individualism still current in the United States,” and it clearly is alive and well four decades later. For the American, he observed, “follows the decrees of fashion designers and the examples of social leaders unquestioningly, but outdoes the European in vigorous protest against governmental regulatory measures that threaten his economic freedom.” Or put differently, he “behaves exactly like his frontier ancestor, and with as little regard for consistency.”<sup>214</sup>

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extent to which his individualist frontiersmen also depended on government for forts, roads, schools, and so on.

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R.A. Billington, The American Frontier, p. 28. Again, it may be questioned whether this is an uniquely American trait, or whether the same could not be said of the Anglo-

Allied to the issue of individualism is that of the frontiersman's alleged spirit of personal inventiveness, as opposed to cultural traditionalism. In this regard Turner argued that we naturally expect the frontier to produce an environment of innovation, if only because of "the unique problems demanding solution, the premium placed on labor-saving machinery by the scarcity of manpower, and the absence of a tradition that would require the use of time-tested practices." Yet at first sight, as some of Turner's critics point out, the actual residents of the frontier "showed a surprising reluctance to experiment" and "they lagged behind Easterners in inventiveness." Furthermore, most of the tools that "won the West" – "the Kentucky rifle, farm machinery, well-digging equipment, fencing, windmills, improved agricultural techniques, and dozens more" – resulted from the efforts of Eastern draftsmen, engineers and captains of industry. When needed new tools failed to appear, the course of the westward movement altered accordingly. As noted above, for example, in the 1830s-1840s a lack of the machinery capable of farming the grasslands of the Great Plains (or "Great Desert") forced the course of migration to pass on to the more familiar environments of Oregon and California. But when the requisite technologies for exploiting these lands became available in the 1870s-1880, this helped promote the settlement of the Great Plains region.<sup>215</sup>

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Scottish borderers, the settlers of Iceland, Russia's Cossacks, Nova Scotia's Acadians, and the other borderers mentioned below.

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*Ibid.*, p. 29. The experience of the 1840s could be interpreted as supporting Lattimore's concept of an "eccological-materialist frontier."

Even so, as Billington believes concentrating on this achievement may lead us to miss the deeper significance of the frontier for American inventors. It is indeed true that the majority of “draftsmen, engineers and inventors” did not live on the frontier, where the more primitive conditions of life initially did not favor the education and investment necessary for major technological innovation. Rather, he suggests, the pioneers’ inventiveness was more directly focused on the immediate problems of daily survival. Nevertheless, it was still the demands created by the frontier that both inspired the innovations and made their manufacture profitable for the East’s growing industrial base. So, in Billington’s words, “the existence of a frontier did stimulate innovation, partly by creating a demand for new products, partly by fostering an attitude receptive to change.” In addition, “new products were always in demand as settlers moved westward over differing environments; the tools suitable for one were outmoded by the next. This, combined with the relative lack of manpower, created a demand for a variety of machines that was supplied by eastern inventors.”<sup>216</sup>

This real demand apart, Billington also suggests that the western movement created a distinctive “social atmosphere receptive to innovation.” He explains that pioneer or frontier communities provided “ideal testing grounds for anything that was new” because of “their plastic social order, their lack of tradition, their absence of established producers who would resist changes threatening their products, their freedom from political pressures produced by vested interests, and their need for labor-saving devices

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Ibid., pp. 29-30.

to offset a lack of manpower.” Following Turner, he believes this same lack of traditionalist inhibition “helps explain the social and physical mobility that existed” within such pioneer communities, a mobility that became “part of the frontier heritage” thanks to above-mentioned abundant resources and a low ratio of men to land. Although the process of social stratification undoubtedly “began almost with the first settlers,” Billington insists that the new class distinctions “were less rigidly drawn than in older societies.” For this reason he claims that while the modern American rate of vertical mobility may indeed approximate that of Western Europe, “there remains one all-important difference; in America the majority believe that vertical mobility is inevitable.” And he concludes that the fact, or perhaps the alleged fact, that today’s United States “is relatively less hidebound and more prone to experiment than older European nations seems traceable in part to the social atmosphere derived from the frontiering past.”<sup>217</sup>

Whatever reality these last claims may seemingly have had in the era of John F. Kennedy’s “New Frontier,” they seem somewhat tarnished four decades late. Nonetheless, it is obvious that Billington in many ways shared much of Turner’s vision. Indeed, on occasion he even dismissed the debate over Turner’s thesis as “silly,” and as being largely a matter of semantics, and over his own career repeatedly set out to reexamine the Turner thesis in the light of modern research in history and the social sciences. As a result, he recasts Turner’s “meeting point between savagery and

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Ibid., p. 30.

civilization” into the more prosaic and above-cited definition of the frontier as “a geographic region” bordering on “unsettled portions of the continent,” regions in which a low man-to-land ratio and exceptionally abundant natural resources await exploitation and so offer exceptional opportunities for the “social and economic betterment to the small-propertied individual.” Although Billington’s own critics suggest that this is not pure Turner, his studies still offer a reliable guide to the developing heritage left by the generally recognized founder of “frontier studies.”<sup>218</sup>

One leading American intellectual historian judges that Billington, like his master Turner, is perhaps not so much “the historian of the frontier..., but the historian of America who took his vantage point along the frontier.”<sup>219</sup> Owen Lattimore, another frontier scholar, supports this view. “Turner, in fact, was an acute observer,” he writes, “but what he saw so clearly, he saw while standing on his head.” This is because to a large extent, “when he thought he saw what the frontier did to society, he was really seeing what society did to the frontier.” Lattimore further argues that this posture of

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Ray Allen Billington, America's Frontier Heritage (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston; 1966), p. 25. Also see his America's Frontier Culture: Three Essays (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University; 1977); Land of Savagery, Land of Promise: The European Image of the American Frontier in the Nineteenth Century (New York: W.W. Norton; 1980); The Far Western Frontier, 1830-1860 (New York: Harper and Row; 1956); as editor, The Reinterpretation of Early American History (San Marino, CA: Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery; 1966); and Westward Expansion: A History of the Frontier, 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan; 1967).

<sup>219</sup>

Henry Steele Commager, The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character since the 1880's (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1950), p. 294. Also see his introduction to Turner’s essay in his edited volume Living Ideas in America (New York: Harper and Brothers; 1951), pp. 72-73.

“standing on his head also accounts for the fact that he touches only glancingly on the American frontiers of the French and Spanish.” A closer examination of these examples, Lattimore insists, would have revealed that the impact of imported institutions on frontiers was considerably greater than even Billington is prepared to admit.<sup>220</sup> While this issue need not concern us overly at the moment, the study of any frontier must of necessity pay full attention to both the centre and the periphery, to the nature of the symbiotic balance existing between them, and to the borderland interactions that occur when frontier peripheries collide, since both elements are by nature two-sided entities – issues that will be considered in the course of the discussions that follow.

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O. Lattimore, “The Frontier in History,” pp. 490-491.

**CHAPTER III:  
TURNER'S FRONTIER AND  
OTHER PLACES, OTHER TIMES, OTHER THEORIES**

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt,  
Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee,  
In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass  
the night.  
Kindling a fire and broiling the fresh-kill'd game,  
Falling asleep on the gather'd leaves with my dog  
and gun by my side.

The Yankee clipper is under her sky-sails, she  
cuts the sparkle and scud,  
My eyes settle the land, I bend at her prow of  
shout joyously from the deck.

The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early and  
stopt for me,  
I tuck'd my trouser-ends in my boots and went  
and had a good time;  
You should have been with us that day round the  
chowder-kettle.

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air  
in the far west, the bride was a red girl,  
Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged  
and dumbly smoking, they had moccasins to  
their feet and large thick blankets hanging  
from their shoulders,

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--- Walt Whitman (1819-1892), from "Song of Myself," in Tom Paulin, The Faber Book of Vernacular Verse (London and Boston: Faber and Faber; 1990), p. 64.

Whatever their doubts about the essence of his theory, even Frederick Jackson Turner's staunchest opponents acknowledged his positive contribution to American historiography. This was the case, for instance, with two of his sternest critics, Charles and Mary Beard, who in 1930 charged that "in their enthusiasm for a long-neglected subject," the influence of the Western frontier on American life, Turner and "his school of meticulous workers" had "pressed their argument too far." Even so, they also acknowledged that "at all events they have forced the historians of Puritans and Cavaliers to take note of something more realistic than Sunday sermons and armorial scrolls."<sup>1</sup> They were far from alone in rejecting or belittling the significance of Turner's thesis as the main analytical key to the American narrative, yet it nonetheless retained a central position in popular American historiography. "The frontier," writes William Coleman, "we have assumed ... virtually created the American nation. Here was a new state, one characterized by a distinctive and very probably unique form of society."<sup>2</sup>

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Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, The Rise of American Civilization, illus. Wilfred Jones, 2 vols. in one (New York: Macmillan; 1930), i, p. 516. Also see the discussion in Max Lerner, America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the United States Today (New York: Simon and Schuster; 1957), pp. 35-39. Again, while the controversial "safety valve" aspect of Turner's theory of "free land" has not been discussed here, it is interesting that in the mid-1960s Barrington Moore, Jr., still recognized the value of this insight; see his Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the of the Modern World (Boston: Beacon; 1966-1967), pp. 130-132.

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William Coleman, "Science and Symbol in the Turner Frontier Thesis," American Historical Review, 72 (October 1966), No. 1, p. 22.



Despite the claims and efforts of Ray Allen Billington and other adherents of the Turner school,<sup>3</sup> doubters remained and grew in number over time. Quite apart questions over the significance of Turner's theory for American history, its utility for attempts at comparative studies with frontier elsewhere was equally debatable. By the 1970s some so engaged further warned that "the implicit assumption" that his theory offered "a sufficient theoretical base" for studying other frontiers often had proved "to be unproductive." In the view of David Miller and Jerome Steffen, this was because Turner "did not really state a hypothesis." They insist that apart from borrowing Achille Loria's theory of "free land," the "real thrust" of his essay was a need "to find a theme for a nationalist historiography in American terms." If later discussions produced "a number of alternative statements" of his thesis, they complain that these, too, were also formulated "in more or less vague terms." They therefore argue it is "a definite necessity" that discussion continue on the theoretical basis for any comparative study of frontiers to determine just what was a frontier, and what possible types of frontiers might exist. For clearly, "no one definition ... has emerged, just as it is clear that no single methodology will suffice for every frontier study."<sup>4</sup>

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See, for example, the discussion in Ray Allen Billington, The American Frontier, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: American Historical Association; 1965)

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David Harry Miller and Jerome O. Steffen, eds., "Introduction," in The Frontier: Comparative Studies, v.1 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 1977), p. 6. Also see John C. Hudson, "Theory and Methodology in Comparative Frontier Studies," in Ibid., pp. 11-32, and the comments in William W. Savage and Stephen I. Thompson, "The Comparative History of the Frontier: An Introduction," in W. W. Savage and S. I. Thompson, eds., The Frontier: Comparative Studies No. 2 (Norman, OK: University of

Writing about Latin America in 1978, Alistair Hennessy confronts this issue head-on and complains “that Turner’s name has been invoked too often for the good health of historical scholarship.” So while he has no intention of “dragging” Turner into South America, a region Turner himself was careful to avoid discussing, Hennessy still finds his frontier thesis useful as “a starting point for comparison, as comparisons need not necessarily be confined to similar situations but may be used to provoke discussion and open up new perspectives” in others. Of equal interest is his contention that “frontiers” are “not the same as the frontier.” Although he admits “[s]ome useful purpose might have been served by defining the term frontier more precisely,” he believes “it is difficult to do so without hedging it with qualifications. Precise definitions can cramp and distort as well as pinpoint and illuminate.” He admits, however, that some may see his “use of the word here is too elastic, that almost everything in Latin American history has been subsumed under a capacious umbrella.” This, he believes, is merely a natural result of “the peculiarities of the original settlement pattern,” thanks to which Latin American frontiers lack “that identifiable cutting edge” that distinguished most North American frontiers. Indeed, Hennessy maintains that the “majority of Latin American nations today [1978] are still in the frontier stage of development but unlike the United States -- this is a crucial difference -- they are frontier societies lacking a frontier myth.”<sup>5</sup>

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Oklahoma; 1979), pp. 3-24.

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Alistair Hennessy, The Frontier in Latin American History (London: Edward Arnold; 1978), pp. 3-4.

Some three years later Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson went further still by resurrecting charges that Turner, and after him Billington, had “wittingly or unwittingly” promoted a “cultural imperialism” that was “conspicuous in frontier history” in the case of nations like the United States and South Africa. The “hypothesis that the frontier experience shaped both the American character and American institutions” was natural enough in the 1890s, an era of Social Darwinism and rising American power and nationalism. But it had led to a claim, continued by Billington, “that the American frontier experience was unique and therefore incomparable, leaving Americans to stand apart even from the history of Western Europe, the region from which most American emigrants came.” While everything of course “is unique; ... everything is also related to other things in systematic and comparable ways.”<sup>6</sup> These writers then go on to insist that one of the Turner theory’s “least persuasive claims ... is that American frontiersmen had faith in the equality of all men,” an “assertion” they see as being “contradicted by the fact that these same frontiersmen excluded Indians, Mexicans, and blacks from equal status.”<sup>7</sup> Apart from Social-Darwinist preconceptions, they ascribe this conclusion to “conceptual stretching” or “conceptional-straining,” which results in “vague, amorphous conceptualizations” that “lose connotative precision.” In their view Turner has fallen into this “logical trap” by arguing “that the American pioneers’ confrontation with the

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Leonard Thompson and Howard R. Lamar, "Comparative Frontier History," in Howard R. Lamar and Leonard Thompson, eds. The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared. (New Haven, CT: Yale University ; 1981), pp. 1-2.

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Ibid., pp. 2, 11-12.

wilderness was so overpowering that it reduced all of them to social and physical conditions of rough equality,” which in turn “fostered a sense of democracy that ... accounts for the American political system.” In this manner, they claim Turner ignores “complex problems of cause and effect ... for a dramatic and attractive, if very broad, conceptualization of the nature of the United States,” which they add is true as well of Webb's stimulating work, The Great Frontier, which “embraces the entire process” of modern European expansion. Although this is “a legitimate and important field of study” in its own right, they believe Webb’s approach deprives the word frontier “of substantial content.”<sup>8</sup>

Having disposed of Turner in this manner, Lamar and Thompson feel constrained to offer their own working model of “frontier.” To begin with, like almost all historians involved in this debate, they regard it “not as a boundary or line, but as a territory or zone of interpenetration between two previously distinct societies.” As their comments just cited indicate, one of these “is indigenous to the region, or at least has occupied it for many generations,” while “the other is intrusive.” Such a frontier “‘opens’ in a given zone when the first representatives the intrusive society arrive,” and it “‘closes’ when a single political authority has established hegemony over the zone.” This means that closure occurs in that zone when the intruders have exterminated the indigenous people (as in Tasmania); have expelled them (as with the removal of the Cherokees and other native peoples from east of the Mississippi in the 1830s); subjugated them and

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<sup>8</sup>

Ibid., pp. 2, 11-12.

incorporated them into their own political and economic system (as in South Africa); or have themselves been incorporated by the indigenous people (as with the Portuguese in the Zambesi valley during the 1500s-1800s) or been forced into a stalemate (as with New Spain's frontier in Texas and New Mexico in the 1700s).<sup>9</sup>

Even this list simplifies and constrains the possible range of situations. For example, the zone may contain two or more, often competitive, intruder or indigenous groups (as in the borderlands between New France and New England). Again, the differences between intruders and indigenes may be difficult to ascertain (as between French and Germans in the Rhineland, or Germans and Slavs in some east European borderlands). Yet overall, Lamar and Thompson argue that "there are three essential elements in any frontier situation as we conceive it:" territory, defined as being the geography, climate, and so on of the given frontier zone, and the technologies involved in dealing with these conditions; the presence of two or more initially distinct peoples, their respective cultures and intentions within the given zone; and "the process by which the relations among the peoples in the territory begin, develop, and eventually crystallize."<sup>10</sup>

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Ibid., pp. 7-8.

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Ibid., pp. 9-10. In introducing their definition, Lamar and Thompson (pp. 4-5) recognize their debt to the ethno-historical studies of Jack Forbes, "who has defined a frontier as 'an intergroup situation,'" and who despite numerous and wide-ranging diversities, considers "'that the frontier should be seen as a phenomenon with common basic characteristics wherever and whenever it has existed in history;'" and to Robin F. Wells who defined a frontier system as "a distinct sociocultural type." But otherwise they found neither Forbes nor Wells "very helpful in setting limits to the frontier concept," and they insist that if "'an intergroup situation' is intrinsic to our definition of a frontier, it is only part of a full definition;" see Jack D. Forbes, "Frontiers in American History

In 1987 Igor Korytoff launched another major critique of and attempt at reformulating Turner within a comparative framework. He regards the latter's thesis as endowing "the general image of the frontier with particularly American characteristics." It is a "tidal" frontier that sweeps "like a tidal wave or succession of waves across a sub-continental or at least national landmass," and it carries "with it settler societies engaged in colonizing an alien land from a base in a metropolitan society whose authority usually follows more or less closely on their heels." The problem is, he argues, that this image tends to restrict application of the term "frontier" to similar situations in other places and time such as Canada, Latin America, Hungary, Australia, Russia, and Germany, among others. Furthermore, he believes that Turner's vigorous presentation made his theoretical conclusions seem "misleadingly unidimensional" and deterministic in a manner that hampers its use for comparative studies. In practice, however, the "case for the frontier's uniform impact rapidly collapses when one considers other societies that grew out of a frontier, be it China, Russian Siberia, parts of Latin America, the Hungarian plain, East Prussia, the Southeast Asian lowlands, or what have you." This is true even for such "culturally similar societies" as New France, Western Canadian and even some American frontiers, which "have been notably different." But if a "half-century of

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and the Role of Frontier Historians," Ethnohistory, 15 (1968), p. 207, as well as his "Frontiers in American History," Journal of the West, 1 (July 1962), pp. 63-73; as well as "The Indian in the West: A Challenge for Historians," Arizona and the West, 1 (Autumn 1959); and R.W. Wells, "Frontier Systems as a Sociocultural Type," Papers in Anthropology, 14 (1973), pp. 6-15.

enthusiasm, argument, rejection, spirited defense, and revival” does not leave us with a thesis, he believes we still have “elements out of which a frontier ‘model’ may be fashioned for Africa,” and presumably elsewhere.<sup>11</sup>

Like many others, Kopytoff begins by noting that the term “frontier” in fact “conflates two meanings: of a region and of a boundary” Over the centuries either or both may move (and thus become what Lattimore called an “oscillating frontier”), or achieve the “nearly metaphorical cast” used by anthropologists in referring to a zone in which there is “any kind of interaction across cultural boundaries.” Equally important, the “mere existence of areas open to intrusion and settlement does not make a frontier. A frontier is made by frontiersmen.” Moreover, a frontier’s significance as a region or zone is not that it determines or creates political character, be it in the United States or elsewhere. Rather, Kopytoff writes, such a zone is important “as an institutional vacuum,” or a “place where the frontiersmen could literally construct a desirable social order.” Even so, he continues, they arrived at the frontier “not with a sociological and political tabula rasa, to be shaped by its forests and plains, but with a mental model of a good society,” the elements of which model “went well into the past, and not merely the American past at that.”<sup>12</sup> Kopytoff further suggests that in America, a relationship existed

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Igor Kopytoff, “Introduction,” in Igor Kopytoff, ed., The African Frontier (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 1987); , pp. 8, 12.

<sup>12</sup>

Ibid., pp. 9-13. Kopytoff’s view of the frontiersman and nature of the frontier culture he creates will be examined at greater length below.

“between the western frontier and the eastern metropole,” and that the “American frontier allowed frontiersmen to apply the ideal model and produce a result that was indeed purer, simpler, more naive, and more faithful to the model than one could possibly have it in the East.” Not surprisingly, this construct also became corrupted as the “frontier” eventually moved on to the west, carrying the model to the next zone as well. But not “only was the model thus kept alive,” Kopytoff argues, but “its incorporation into living social forms in the West strengthened its place in the national consciousness as expressed in the culturally hegemonic East, which remained the dominant ideological articulator (though not practitioner) of the national political culture.” In this manner, he suggests “that Turner's original insights might now be reinterpreted into a model of cultural process,” although the same “reinterpretation also suggests how unusual among frontiers is the American one with its peculiar egalitarian ethic.”<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, Kopytoff believes that with “important modifications,” Turner’s “frontier perspective can be usefully transferred from America to other frontiers.” He lists the the main elements of this modified perspective as being:

- a) The frontier perspective is permissive rather than determinant; it does not create a type of society and culture but provides instead an institutional vacuum for the unfolding of social processes.
- b) An important variable in the structure of relations between frontier and metropole is whether the frontier is an area into which the metropole is

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<sup>13</sup>

Ibid., pp. 12-13.



itself expanding, or one in which it merely sends out settlers who remain independent of the metropole.

c) A crucial factor in the outcome of the frontier process is the nature of the initial model carried from the metropolitan culture to the frontier.

d) The institutional vacuum perceived by the frontiersmen exists to the extent that the balance of forces gives them the freedom of action to express the model brought from the metropole -- to express it more directly and forcefully in the course of social construction than it could be in the metropole.

e) If communications continue between the metropole and the frontier, the repetitive use of the model on the frontier maintains it in the regional cultural awareness, validates it, and constantly revitalizes it. The frontier may consequently act as a culturally and ideologically conservative force.

Kopytoff underlines that his last point -- the potential conservative functions of some frontiers -- is, of course, "a radical departure from the core of Turner's thesis for the United States," but a conclusion that is borne out in Africa. He therefore "suggests that Turner's thesis for America may well be re-examined in this 'conservative' perspective."<sup>14</sup>

One aspect of Kopytoff's exposition deserves additional comment -- his idea of the "frontier as institutional vacuum." Here he clearly seeking to avoid criticism like that directed at Turner. He therefore notes that if in the literature, "frontier" commonly implies "a no-man's land," it still "is almost always inhabited by some kinds of 'aboriginal' societies." So while the West "was a frontier to American settlers; to the Indians, it was their home," and in time a home under attack. This was true in Africa as well, so that to call a frontier "empty" is "a political judgement made from the intruders'

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<sup>14</sup>

Ibid., pp. 13-14.

perspective.” For to “most African frontiersmen -- as to others -- a frontier was an area in which they felt they could aspire to establish themselves, free of their metropolitan ties and without being beholden to new political masters.” They thus considered it, in this sense, to be “an institutional vacuum in which they could consider themselves not to be morally bound by institutional constraints.” This was the conception, but whether or not “the frontiersmen could or did succeed in their hopes is another question.”<sup>15</sup>

Kopytoff sees the “essence of the frontier as a historical phenomenon” as being that “once outsiders have defined an area as a frontier and have intruded into it in order to settle in it, there begins a process of social construction that, if successful, brings it into a new society.” His focus is on the process in which the “building of new societies” is “paralleled by the demise of established societies,” a process that he argues “has been a continuous one in African history.” But he adds that “a host of factors” – geographical, demographic, and political – governed the extent to which the intruders fulfilled their “aspiration to succeed on the frontier” and, depending on the region, “made this process more or less likely to take place.” In practice, however, a “frontier was seldom an institutional vacuum, even if the frontiersmen saw it as such morally.” For in the final analysis, Kopytoff concludes, “the outcome of the immigrants' attempts at social construction on the frontier was necessarily affected by the political and cultural relations between metropole and frontier, the relative population densities of the

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<sup>15</sup>

Ibid., p. 25.

societies involved, and the organization and strength of the 'aboriginal' societies."<sup>16</sup>

### **The Contemporary Debate**

During the 1990s the Turner centennial (1993-1994) naturally promoted a revival of interest in his theory and its influence.<sup>17</sup> Even so, the growing consensus that frontiers were zones within which two or more parties competed for hegemony, seemingly combined with the growing interest in cultural studies, to promote the use of Bolton's term "borderland," rather than Turner's "frontier," in many academic milieus. At the same time, the movement for West European integration and after 1989, the collapse of the Soviet empire, produced a lively literature on old European-style frontiers and issues of border demarcation among a range of social scientists. In the final analysis, apart from the concept of "border landscapes" (that is, the physical and visible symbolic impact of a border or boundary on a landscape), these discussions have added little of interest to the debates of historians.

Meanwhile, many of the old issues, although decked out in the proverbial "new clothes," now cut in the fashion of "post-modern" cultural and gender studies, have remained unresolved. This became apparent in 1999 from the above-mentioned debate

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<sup>16</sup>

Ibid., pp. 25-26.

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See, for example, "A Centennial Symposium on the Significance of Frederick Jackson Turner," Journal of the Early Republic, 13 (1993), 133-249; David M. Wrobel, The End of American Exceptionalism (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas; 1993), and "Frontiers — A Global View," a special issue of the Journal of the West, 34 (October 1995), No. 4.

which opened with an article in the June issue of the American Historical Review by Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron. They first review the development of the place of Turner and Bolton in American historiography and then note the prevalence of the use of “borderland” in recent writings, which they credit having “enriched our understanding of the complexity and contingency of intercultural relations.” Consequently, concepts of “straightforward conquests” have given way to an emphasis on “the accommodations between invaders and indigenes and the hybrid residuals of these encounters” along the “North American borderland-frontiers.”<sup>18</sup> At the same time, they maintain that the scholars making this case all too often “neglect the power politics of territorial hegemony,” and also “overlook the essentially competitive nature of European imperialism and the ways in which these rivalries shaped transitions from colonies to nation-states” during the 1700s-1800s. Yet in the absence of “the inter-imperial dimension of borderlands, the cross-cultural relations that defined frontiers take on a too simple face: ‘Europe’ blurs into a single element, and ‘Indians’ merge into a common front.” In addition, Adelman and Aron believe that “by stressing the persistence of cross-cultural mixing, social fluidity, and the creation of syncretic formations, new work on borderlands-frontiers has downplayed profound changes in favor of continuity.” Or put differently, in such writings “a timeless legacy of cultural continuity shrouds the rise and

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Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation States, and the Peoples In Between in North American History,” American Historical Review. 104, (October 1999), No. 4, p. 815.

fall of empires, [and] the struggles between indigenous and metis/mestizo peoples,” in which respect Turner’s old thesis has at least the merits of insisting “on temporal boundaries.”<sup>19</sup>

This said, Adelman and Aron, following in the long line of scholars cited above, set out to make their own attempt “to disentangle frontiers from borderlands,” and so “rescue the virtues of each construct.” They first turn to the term “frontier,” by which they understand to be “a meeting place of peoples in which geographic and cultural borders are not clearly defined.” In addition, and in line with recent studies of frontiers that describe them “as borderless lands,” they “stress how intercultural relations produced mixing and accommodation as opposed to unambiguous triumph.” Even so, they believe that Bolton’s original stress on these regions as sites of imperial rivalry remains important and, accordingly, they “reserve the designation of borderlands for the contested boundaries between colonial domains.” For they insist by “the pairing of the intercolonial and intercultural dimensions, differences of European rationales and styles come to the fore, as do shifts in those rationales and styles.” As well, “the ways in which Indians exploited differences and compelled these shifts, partly to resist submission but mainly to negotiate intercultural relations on terms more to their liking,” are equally significant aspects of both frontiers and borderlands. By taking all these elements into consideration, these writers suggest that both borderlands and frontiers can be provided

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<sup>19</sup>

Ibid.

with the necessary “vocabulary to describe the variegated nature of European imperialism and of indigenous reactions to colonial encroachments.”<sup>20</sup>

Adelman and Aron then explain that their own essay, “in short, argues that the conflicts over borderlands shaped the peculiar and contingent character of frontier relations.” They add that by the latter 1800s, after a period of transition from colonies to new nation states, borders were recognized by treaties while the “lexicon of mutual respect for treaties,” as inscribed in these documents, “crept into international diplomacy.” Furthermore, with a few exceptions, by 1900 competition in trade rather than that for territorial dominion provided the guiding framework for power politics. In their view, this shift from inter-imperial conflict to international coexistence converted borderlands into “bordered” (that is, legally defined by borderlines) lands. This means that such borderlands now became the province of international lawyers, commissions for borderline demarcation, and subsequently, of the political scientists.<sup>21</sup> These

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<sup>20</sup>

Ibid., pp. 815-816.

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Ibid., p. 816. As indicated below, these comments are specifically appropriate to North America in the 1700s-1800s and do not represent the situation in Western Europe. Although technical problems made precise border demarcations there difficult before 1800, the existence of border-boundaries had been regularly stipulated by treaties, and generally recognized accordingly, at least since the Peace of Westphalia had ended the Thirty Years' War in 1648; see Harold Nicolson, The Evolution of Diplomatic Method (London: Cassell; 1954), pp. 48-71; Kalevi J. Holsti, Peace and War: Armed Conflicts and International Order, 1648-1989 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1991), chapters 2-7; and on the Westphalian Congress, Derek Croxton, Peacemaking in Early Modern Europe: Cardinal Mazarin and the Congress of Westphalia, 1643-1648 (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press; 1999). The best general introduction to

developments also had a direct impact on the inhabitants of the earlier contested borderlands. They now lost much of their room for maneuver so that their chances of preserving some degree of autonomy, let alone political independence, narrowed considerably. As states claimed and exerted exclusive political dominion over all the territory within their formal political borders, the Indians were deprived of the advantage of occupying the lands “in-between,” and of a chance to play rivals off against each other. Instead, “as colonial borderlands gave way to national borders, fluid and ‘inclusive,’ inter-cultural frontiers yielded to hardened and more ‘exclusive’ hierarchies.” But having again stressed that this is not a “timeless” process, but one with distinct temporal phases, Adelman and Aron conclude that during the imperial struggles for North America in the 1700s, “the fates of the borderlands were linked together. Over the long run, ... European and indigenous fortunes in one area shaped -- if not dictated - outcomes in the other North American borderlands.”<sup>22</sup>

These authors are speaking of North America and make no claim that their conclusions have relevance in different circumstances elsewhere. In Europe west of Russia, for example, open frontiers already had largely disappeared by 1700, borderlands had been eliminated, and a frontier usually meant a fortified border zone. This point is

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all aspects of the theory and processes of border delimitation and demarcation is J.R.V. Prescott, Political Frontiers and Boundaries (London: Allen and Unwin; 1987).

<sup>22</sup>

J. Adelman and S. Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders,” p. 516.

taken up by Evan Haefeli, author of one of the responses published in the same journal's next issue.<sup>23</sup> What, if anything, useful, he asks, has North American history and historiography to offer the rest of the world? He rightly points out that Adelman and Aron make no effort to raise this question since their "targets" were accepted "truths" of the American historiography of the Westward Movement. Consequently, the question remains: "Are they, then, making a genuine theoretical contribution to the study of frontier and imperial dynamics? Or are they just tweaking the familiar old story of American expansion?"<sup>24</sup> Although Haefeli agrees that recent scholarship "has rendered this tale more complicated and less biased," he insists that "the scholarly fascination with American frontier and western history retains much of the narcissism of Frederick Jackson Turner's celebratory thesis." Despite all their criticism and revisions, he believes that American scholars remain focused on Turner's "obsession with the history of the United States rather than frontiers" as such, and he therefore wonders whether the result, in fact, is nothing "more than a colorful new overcoat to the old story of nation building." In the final analysis, however, Adelman's and Aron's proposals must be

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Evan Haefeli, "A Note on the Use of the North American Borderlands," American Historical Review, 104 (October 1999), No. 4, 1222-1225. Other interesting responses, not discussed here, include Christopher Ebert Schmidt-Nowara, "Borders and Borderlands of Interpretation," pp. 1226-1228; John R. Wunder and Pekka Hamalainen, "Of Lethal Places and Lethal Essays," pp. 1229-1334; and the reply of J. Adelman and S. Aron, "Of Lively Exchanges and Larger Perspectives," pp. 1235-1239.

<sup>24</sup>

E. Haefeli, "A Note on the Use of North American Borderlands," p. 1223.



considered instead within “the context of frontiers and borderlands other than those of the early republic before they can be accepted as a genuine theoretical breakthrough.”<sup>25</sup>

In Haefeli’s view, from the perspective of world history, the frontiers of North America “are remarkable for their instability and fluidity.” Elsewhere, he tells us, “the frontiers of powerful societies tended to form along ecological boundaries and last for centuries.” Thus the expansion of Mesoamerican, Andean, Roman, Middle Eastern, Egyptian, and Chinese civilizations were halted by forests, deserts and vast open steppe lands. This means that their frontiers had little in common with the American frontier and its “steady march” across the continent. More importantly, these earlier civilizations – despite the walls and fortresses they built to delimit and bolster their frontiers – remained as likely to be conquered by as to conquer the “barbarians” across the line. In addition, military conquest and even settlement did not necessarily mean an “end” or “closing” of these frontiers. “Until undermined by technology or dramatic political changes,” he writes, these “frontiers always risked reestablishing themselves.”<sup>26</sup>

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Ibid., pp. 1223-1224.

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Ibid., p. 1224. Despite Haefeli’s obvious reliance on Owen Lattimore’s “ecological” theory of frontiers (see chapter 2), the long-term history of those of Russia in the southern steppe, the Caucasus and Siberia are not dissimilar to a “march across the continent.” To some extent, the same is true of China’s northern and western frontiers in Manchuria and Central Asia which, as Haefeli admits, were at least as “unstable,” and sometimes as “fluid,” as those of the North American West. Perhaps the real difference is that these “frontier processes” took place over millennia, while that of North America lasted some three centuries at most.

Haefeli insists that "North American history has had a very distinct trajectory" and "forts, frontiers, and boundaries rose, fell, and shifted dramatically within the span of a single lifetime." For unlike the situation facing the frontier expansionists elsewhere, he argues that once the first European settlers had established themselves in the North America, "nothing short of well-defended forts and open warfare limited the expansion of Anglo-American agriculturists across the highly compatible ecologies of the vast eastern woodlands into northern New England, Kentucky, or the Southeast." Then, subsequently, a "terrific mobilization of resources" combined with "technological innovation" to promote "their rapid expropriation of the more geographically challenging West," the native inhabitants of which had even less power than their eastern cousins to stem the tide of settlers. Furthermore, he maintains that at "virtually no point after about 1640 did the colonizers risk being being conquered or driven out by the Amerindians," with the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 "being a rare, and brief, exception."<sup>27</sup>

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Ibid. Again, Haefeli's comments on the possibility of native opposition's victory may be fair enough with regard to the westward movement after 1812. But with regard to the earlier period, they simplify a complex story and obscure moments when the survival of one colony or another may indeed have been "a very near thing." A good introduction to this issue is Ian K. Steele, Warpaths: Invasions of North America (New York and Oxford: Oxford University; 1994). Other useful approaches to this subject include Armstrong Starkey's general assessment European and Native American Warfare, 1675-1815 (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 1998), and the other works cited in chapters 1-2 above. The colonial Americans' knowledge of military theory, John Morgan Dederer's, War in America to 1775 (New York: New York University; 1990); and on the crisis of King Philip's "rebellion" of 1675-1678 see chapter 1 above.

The Iroquois onslaught against New France is discussed in Gustave Lanctot, A History of Canada, 3 vols. (Toronto, Ont.: Clarke, Irwin; 1963, 1964), i, chapters 15-20,

Indeed, it is only “the long-enduring Spanish frontier in the Southeast, limited by the natural environment and the tenuousness of the Spanish presence,” that Haefeli believes resembled anything like the frontier experience of peoples outside of North America.<sup>28</sup>

According to this critic, the concept of borderlands as presented by Adelman and Aron seems most appropriate when applied to their narrative of the Southwest. He suggests, however, that it also might work well in the northeastern region between New England and New France, and in the colonial Southeast, where the borderlands lasted for almost a century. All this said, Haefeli still believes that since the North American frontier experience has been so thoroughly studied and well-documented, if it is used with care, it well “could be of genuine interest to scholars of frontiers and borderlands around the globe.” But he argues that in order to give real substance to the idea of a

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ii, chapters 3 10-14, and more recently, Gilles Harvard, The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701: French-Native Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century, trans. Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott (Montreal, PQ, and Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen’s University; 2001). The impact of these struggles on the colonists is discussed in Peter Silver, Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America (New York and London: W.W. Norton; 2008).

Meanwhile the later struggle for the plains is reviewed in John Keegan, Warpaths: Travels of a Military Historian in North America (Toronto: Key Porter Books; 1995), pp. 265-334, and the anti-Spanish Pueblo Revolt of 1680 is described in J.F. Bannon, The Spanish Borderlands Frontier, 1513-1821 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston; 1970), pp. 80-88; J.L. Kessel, Spain in the Southwest: A Narrative History of Colonial New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and California (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 2002), pp. 116-124; and more extensively in David Roberts, The Pueblo Revolt: The Secret Rebellion that Drove the Spaniards Out of the Southwest (New York: Simon and Schuster; 2004).

<sup>28</sup>

E. Haefeli, “A Note on the Use of North American Borderlands,” p. 1224.

borderland, “it needs to be differentiated more clearly from its close relative, the frontier.” Defined as “a place where autonomous peoples of different cultures are bound together by a greater, multi-imperial context,” he suggests that the concept might be of “use to historians of other obvious borderlands, like the early modern Balkans and Central Asia, the northwest territories of the British Raj in India, or certain corners of the ancient Near East. Otherwise,” Haefeli concludes, “it will remain a mere catch-phrase for the brief period of frenetic activity preceding the irresistible expansion of Anglo-America.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Metropolitan Centres and Frontier-Borderland Peripheries**

At this point it is worth glancing briefly at another concept that often is applied in discussions of frontiers and borderlands. This is the sociological-anthropological theory of the relationship between political and cultural centres with their associated peripheries during the process of centralizing state power. Although Norbert Elias mooted the concept in 1939, his work only appeared in English in 1982.<sup>30</sup> By that time the theory already had become well-known to Anglo-American social scientists through Edward Shils essay “Center and Periphery.” In this Shils observed that within the structure of every society exists a central space or centre of the order, symbols and values held sacred

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<sup>29</sup>

E. Haefeli, “A Note on the Use of North American Borderlands,” p. 1224.

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Norbert Elias, The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations, 2: State Formation and Civilization trans. From German by Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell; 1982).

by its members. This is a “power zone” which “impinges in various ways on those who live within the ecological domain in which the society exists.” Yet Shils was using the term “centre” metaphorically, and in his theory he claimed it has “nothing to do with geometry and little with geography.” But if his “centre” was not necessarily to be found at a social entity’s geographical centre, it nonetheless represents the primary values of its elite which were carried by means of a range of institutions to those living on its edges or periphery.<sup>31</sup>

Subsequently, others have applied the concept to a host of varied developments, science included. In particular, Stein Rokkan has linked geographically located centres to various political, social and economic characteristics to provide a “conceptual map of Europe.”<sup>32</sup> In these cases, the concept is applied to the role of the centres in the

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For an exposition of the theoretical concepts of “center” and “periphery,” see Edward Shils, Center and Periphery: Essays in Macrosociology (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago; 1975), p. 3.

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See Miriam R. Levin, “Center and Periphery in the History of Science,” in Elizabeth Fox-Genovese and Elizabeth Lasch-Quinn, eds., Reconstructing History: The Emergence of a New Historical Society (New York: Routledge; 1999), 322-346; Bruce D. Porter, War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics (New York: Macmillan-Basic Books; 1994), pp. 29-31; Sivert Langholm, “On the Concepts of Center and Periphery,” Journal of Peace Research, (1971), Nos. 3-4, pp. 273-281; and Stein Rokkan’s “Centre Formation, Nation-Building and Cultural Diversity,” in S.N. Eisenstadt and S. Rokkan, Building States and Nations, vol. 1 (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage; 1973), pp. 73-97; “Dimensions of State Formation: A Possible Paradigm for Research on Variations within Europe,” in Charles Tilly, ed., The Formation of National States in Western Europe (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University; 1975), pp. 562-600; and with D.W. Urwin, “Introduction: Centres and Peripheries in Western Europe,” in S. Rokkan and D.W. Urwin, eds., The Politics of Territorial

formation of centralized and national states within regional zones.<sup>33</sup> Some Marxist scholars also use the concept, but in a simplified form in which the action of states only thinly veils the growing power of commercial and industrial capitalism in forcing the economic integration of less developed peripheries.<sup>34</sup>

One such analyses of this last type is that of the British Marxist historian Michael Hechter. He insists that most modern states originally comprised of two or more cultural groups, and that in certain regions some developed “effective bureaucratic administrations.” In time these regions became the “cores” of emerging states and their inhabitants the Staatsvolk. Later still, each such small core (Castile in Spain, Ile-de-France in France; London and the Home Counties in Britain) had a strong central government as well as, “to varying degrees, distinct cultural practices from those of the outlying, peripheral, regions.” Although core and peripheral regions at first “exist in virtual isolation from one another,” over time the latter usually are absorbed into a national state in a process he calls “internal colonisation.” In this model the “core is seen

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Identity: Studies in European Regionalism (London: Sage; 1982).

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A recent study of this type is Samuel Clark, State and Status: The Rise of the State and Aristocratic Power in Western Europe (Montreal, PQ-Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen’s University; 1995).

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Leading Marxist interpretations include Immanuel Wallerstein, The Modern World System, 3 vols. (New York: Academic Press; 1974-1988), and Michael Hechter, Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1975).

to dominate the periphery politically and to exploit it materially” in economic terms. If peripheral industrialization does occur, it will be “highly specialized and geared for export,” yet “relatively sensitive to price fluctuations in the international market” as well.<sup>35</sup>

In this economic sense, the centre-periphery model has been applied to frontiers in the Atlantic’s northern rim by Thomas McGovern, an historical-archaeologist who deals with medieval Norse settlements in Greenland. With such local “peripheral populations,” he argues that “local subsistence strategies are as strongly conditioned by proximity to market centers [or ‘cores’] as they are by the constraints of local ecology,” a factor with important implications for economic historians. Here the major element is “movement costs,” which tend “to determine both the intensity of interaction between market center and peripheral producer and the type of goods exchanged.” In this regard, McGovern points out that the expansion of “the European world system” during the 1500s-1800s, which was “closely linked to the reduction of the costs and hazards of long distance voyages,” resulted in changing core-periphery relationships. This is because, eventually, “competing cores appeared in former peripheries.” With regard to Greenland, according to McGovern, a similar expansion had occurred in the medieval Scandinavian North Atlantic, and it had brought similar “asymmetric economic relationships.”<sup>36</sup>

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M. Hechter, Internal Colonialism, pp. 4-10.

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Thomas H. McGovern, “The Arctic Frontier of Norse Greenland,” in Stanton W. Green

Apart from being applied to distant frontiers in the Atlantic north and coastline of North America,<sup>37</sup> the terms “centre” and “periphery” have appeared in discussions of state boundaries and borders by political and other social scientists. Consider, for instance, the comments of Swedish scholar Sven Tagil on “the concept of border region.” This he defines as an “area adjacent to a border, whose existence and functions are influenced by its border situation.” But apart from proximity to the boundary or border, the position of such regions “can also be described in terms of distance from and relations to a centre.” Differing historical antecedents aside, at different times and places there have been varying patterns of relationships with regard to the administrative, economic or cultural functions of the state capital and other more local agencies. “The border region,” Tagil continues, “is thus defined both in terms of proximity to a border and distance from a centre.” He sees this as “a spatial dimension” that indicates “a physical-geographical or time-geographical distance.” But a “centre/periphery relation can also be found ... to express differences in terms of resources, usually economic, or of social factors” such as, for example, “nearness to decision-makers or rank dimensions. All these dimensions,” he concludes, “are relevant for the study of border regions,

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and Stephen M. Perlman, eds., The Archaeology of Frontiers and Boundaries (Orlando, FL: Academic Press; 1985), pp. 275-276.

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For the use of this concept in a constitutional-political sense in British colonial America, see Jack P. Greene, Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788 (Athens, GA: University of Georgia; 1986).



particularly if one wants to explain the nature and development of such regions.”<sup>38</sup>

Here we should take note of other, more or less synonymous terms for the centre-periphery dualism. One such pair is “heartland” and “hinterland,” the second term being used as well in conjunction with “metropole” or “metropolitan centre.” In Igor Kopytoff’s discussion of African frontiers above, “metropole” is often used synonymously with “centre” or “core.” It is adopted from ancient Greece, where it denoted a “mother-city” like Athens or Corinth, but as used by social-scientists today it refers to a metropolitan community which is a centre of dominance, though not necessarily in a pejorative manner. In this sense its use dates from Norman S.B. Gras’ An Introduction to Economic History of 1922,<sup>39</sup> after which it was adopted by sociologists at the University of Chicago, by geographers of the school of human ecology and, via the historian Harold Innis it entered the vocabulary of Canadian historiography. In his studies of Canada’s staple and long-distance industries,<sup>40</sup> Innis himself made only

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Sven Tagil, “The Question of Border Regions in Western Europe: An Historical Background,” West European Politics, 5 (October 1982), No. 4, p. 19.

<sup>39</sup>

Gras was the Canadian-born founder of business history at Harvard University. He used the term to mean a capacity for constructive organizing for the good of the full metropolitan-hinterland community rather than for its simple exploitation.

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Harold Innis’ relevant works include The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy, (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1940. Rev. ed.: Toronto: Ryerson; 1954); The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History, rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto; 1970); and more generally, Empire and Communications, revised Mary Q. Innis (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1972).

a limited use of the actual term “metropolitan.” Rather, he usually preferred “power core” or “centre,” and often chose “margin” instead of periphery or frontier. Nonetheless, observes J.M.S Careless, in Innis’ works “there were strong underpinnings for the subsequent study of metropolitanism.” In this way he “laid broad foundations for examining metropolitan development in Canada, no matter if he did so without that deliberate purpose,” and so prepared the ground for Arthur R.M. Lower and the next generation of Canadian historians.<sup>41</sup>

It is not only in Canada that the metropolis-periphery model has proved to be a rewarding analytical construct. For example, the African historian David Newbury applies a similar concept – that of the “metropole” vis-a-vis the “frontier” – in his analysis of western Rwanda. In the process, he also evaluates some of the central elements of the Turner thesis. Although he accepts the more or less usual view of the metropole as a political and cultural core or centre, he is careful to distinguish “frontier” from “periphery.” Here he notes that the concept of “frontier” is, in fact, “paradoxical.” This is because a “frontier society” “is distinct from the metropolitan society,” but

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This account is based on Albert J. Reiss, Jr., “Metropolitan Area,” Julius Gould and William L. Kolb, eds., A Dictionary of the Social Sciences (New York: The Free Press; 1964), p. 426, and J.M.S. Careless, Frontier and Metropolis: Regions, Cities, and Identities in Canada before 1914 (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1989, pp. 50-58 (quote, p. 53). A.R.M. Lower developed his theories in such histories as Colony to Nation: A History of Canada (Toronto, Ont.: Longmans, Green; 1946), and Canadians in the Making: A Social History of Canada (Toronto, Ont.: Longmans, Green; 1958). His views, and the concept of “metropolis-hinterland,” will be discussed in a later chapter.

can only be defined and perceived in relation to the cultural heartland of which it is an extension. This relation between frontier and metropole is critical, differentiating the frontier from other types of 'peripheral' areas, such as the 'Bush' or 'Outback.' From the perspective of the metropole, Bush or Outback are seen negatively, as truly peripheral areas; the frontier, on the other hand, is usually seen positively, as only geographically peripheral but not unimportant. Bush and Outback are not seen as areas of external expansion for the metropole, while the frontier often is; nor are they seen as crucial to the cultural identity of the heartland, which the frontier often is.<sup>42</sup>

Newbury's exploration of the cultural interrelationship between metropole and frontier is particularly interesting and highlights one important aspect of Turner's theory. Although the metropole defines the frontier," he writes, it is still "a zone where the cultural values of the metropole are very much at issue." This is because a frontier provides "alternatives to metropolitan culture – in the form of different cultural values or even a perceived lack of culture." Consequently, the frontier's existence can "threaten the harmony and hegemony of metropolitan values." As a result, "the frontier zone is a region on which the central values of the metropolitan society are projected with great intensity, creating an identity for the frontier in relation to the metropole that reinforces or justifies the metropole's claims to the frontier." Even so, it is only necessary that such projected values "focus on the core area's ties to the frontier," rather than replicate all those found in the core area itself. This means that the values shaping the frontier's identity are "selective values, determined by conditions within the metropole and not by

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David Newbury, "'Bunyabungo:' The Western Rwandan Frontier, c. 1750-1850," in I. Kopytoff, The African Frontier, p. 164.

the realities of the frontier.” As such they often are “idealized values that may be declining or even absent in the cultural heartland.” In this manner, the “identity link” created between frontier and metropole reinforces “the cultural underpinnings seen as eternal and enduring within the heartland,” but which in fact, also “may obscure the tensions of a society in rapid change.”<sup>43</sup>

Newbury illustrates this point by discussing what he calls the “idealization of the American frontier.” This process, he argues, became of importance roughly at the time of “the ‘closing’ of the frontier and the ... transformation of the eastern cities” in the late 1890s. In the “land of the free” on the western frontier, individual initiative supposedly was rewarded with wealth and status, despite a reality in which the lives of those on the frontier were often marked by physical hardship and violence. Despite this, “the myth of the West” gained ground in the East while the supposed “freedom” found on the western frontier “came to be reflected back onto the metropolitan areas, and eventually applied to the polity as a whole.” In time, therefore, “the metropolitan areas adopted the perceived values of the frontier zone as their own, even though these may in fact have been as far removed from the reality of life in the metropole as they were from that of the frontier.”<sup>44</sup>

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Ibid.

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Ibid., pp. 164-165. The argument for this position is presented at length by David Hamilton Murdoch, The American West: The Invention of a Myth (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press; 2001), esp. pp. 12-23, and well illustrated in practice by Frederick Nolan, The Wild West: History, Myth and the Making of America (London and New York: Arcturus Publishing/ Chartwell Books; 2004).

There is, of course, an opposite side to this coin. If the “West” and its “frontiersmen,” who were seen as an extension of the metropole into the frontier zone,” were idealized, then their opponents could hardly escape being demonized. Despite Turner’s relative silence about his frontier’s native inhabitants, the metropole’s popular press was much less so. “For societies expanding through conquest,” Newbury (like others) reminds us, “the concept of the frontier also lends itself to ideologies which justify the expansion and rationalize the incorporation of new groups.” The usual form taken by this “ideological construction” is based on the opposition of the metropole’s values to cultural stereotypes of those for whom the frontier zone is home. “By juxtaposing two cultural ideals in a polarized form, the humanity of the metropolitan culture is invariably stressed in opposition to the inhumanity of the ‘barbarians.’” In his own study of ‘Bunyabungo,’ the name given Rwandan Kingdom’s western frontier, Newbury demonstrates that this “choice may be posed in stark terms: culture or chaos.” The natural consequence of such an attitude is often the justification of the inhumane treatment meted out to “the ‘barbarians’ by the representatives of ‘civilized’ society.” For these reasons, he concludes that the “conceptual paradigm of the frontier, then, is as much a product of the perceptions of other cultures generated by political conditions within the metropole, as it is a product of of the ethnographic realities on the ground.”<sup>45</sup>

### **Myths of the Frontier and the Frontiersman**

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D. Newbury, “‘Bunyabungo:’ The Western Rwandan Frontier, p. 165.

If nothing else, the above review demonstrates that agreement over the concepts of both “frontier” and “borderland” (and the other associated terms as well) remains elusive. Even so, as two American historians “of the West” recently noted, the terms “frontier” and “West” remain “two key words in the American lexicon, and they share an intimate historical relation.” This is because when viewed from the Atlantic coast, “the frontier was the West,” be it Kentucky, Texas or Indiana, and “the West moved on with the frontier.” Consequently, the frontier’s history “is first and foremost the story of where and how cultures meet;” of colonization by pioneers of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds; and of “the creation and defense of communities, the utilization of land, the development of markets, and the formation of states.” If it often is the story of conquest, it is also one of “survival and persistence, of the merging of peoples and cultures that gave birth and continuing life to America as we think of and experience it today.” These writers admit, however, that the intrusion of the Europeans into the continent “created a frontier between natives and newcomers,” and that this was a site of frequent “violent confrontations.” At the same time, they also reject Turner’s contrast of “civilization” and “savagery” as typifying “the arrogance of the victors in the centuries-long campaign of colonial conquest,” and maintain that as a new millennium opens, “many Americans are less sure than Turner who exactly was the savage and who the civilized.”<sup>46</sup>

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Robert V. Hine and John Mack Faragher, Frontiers: A Short History of the American

Whatever one makes of this formulation, it does raise one important aspect of Turner's heritage. Given the continuing debates over the term "frontier" in particular, one might well ask if it has retained any analytical value whatsoever; or is its continuing fascination among American historians perhaps merely nostalgia for a "constructed" nationalist myth of a past era. But Turner's contribution to the "new nationalism" of the 1890s aside, his "frontier" concept and its subsequent academic myth, if such it be, only paralleled another "frontier of 'myth' that existed side by side with a frontier of fact throughout the nineteenth century." As R.A. Billington explains, "modern scholarship has proved that two frontiers have traditionally influenced American thought, and that they bore little relationship to each other." Firstly, there was the real frontier of the Westward Movement, "where sweating pioneer farmers braved the greed of their fellow men and the savagery of nature to eke out an existence." And secondly, there was "an imaginary frontier" with the mythic "frontiersmen" of the West. This existed largely in the minds of many Americans as well as some Europeans, and its images had from the mid-1700s influenced statesmen like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, inspired authors, and had "helped shape the attitude of the people toward their own land as well as toward other nations in the world."<sup>47</sup>

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West (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 2007), pp.5-6.

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Ray A. Billington, The American Frontier, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: American Historical Association; 1965), pp. 33-34. For the views of Jefferson, see Roger G. Kennedy, Mr. Jefferson's Lost Cause: Land, Slavery and the Louisiana Purchase (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press; 2003), esp. 60-87, and Michael Knox

An early formulation of this view had come in 1782. Then St. John Crevecoeur, in his Letters an American Farmer, had asked rhetorically: “What, then, is the American, this new man?” And he replied: “He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of his Alma Mater.”<sup>48</sup> This was the same reward offered those who sought to rebuild their lives by moving to the West where the land seemed limitless, “as free as air and sunshine” and, as one Kentuckian explained, “bounded only by the Day of Judgement.”<sup>49</sup> If some demurred and lamented the fate of the original “Noble Savage” inhabitants, to many observers abroad the Westward

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Beran, Jefferson’s Demons: Portrait of a Restless Mind (New York: The Free Press; 2003), 13-14, 189-191; and on Franklin’s, Walter Isaacson, Benjamin Franklin: An American Life (New York: Simon and Schuster; 2003), pp. 48-153, 423-426; Stacy Schiff, A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America (New York: Henry Holt; 2005), pp. 362-367; and Gordon S. Wood, The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin (New York: Penguin Press; 2004), pp. 70-72, 243-245. George Washington also envisaged a “new West” linked economically to the “old East” by a water transport system based on the Potomac; see Joel Achenbach, The Grand Idea: George Washington’s Potomac and the Race to the West (New York: Simon and Schuster; 2004).

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J. Hector St. John Crevecoeur, Letters from an American Farmer (London, 1782), pp. 45-47 reprinted in L.N. Snyder, ed., Louis L. Snyder, ed., The Dynamics of Nationalism: Readings in Its Meaning and Development (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand; 1964), p. 259.

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Cited in Marshal B. Davidson, Life in America. 2 vols. Boston: Houghton Mifflin -- Riverside Press, 1951, i, p. 157.



Movement not surprisingly did indeed appear to assume epic proportions. “How beautiful to think of lean tough Yankee settlers, tough as gutta-percha, the most occult unsubduable fire in their belly, steering over the Western Mountains to annihilate the jungle, and bring bacon and corn out of it for the Posterity of Adam,” wrote English author Thomas Carlyle to Ralph Waldo Emerson in 1849. “There is no Myth of Athene or Herakles equal to this fact.”<sup>50</sup>

As made clear in the preceding chapters, many immigrants failed to fit the image of the noble frontiersman, and many others failed to achieve the dream.<sup>51</sup> Yet in accord with this vision, the American West remained in the popular imagination “the Garden of the World,” one which supposedly rewarded “all comers” with “complete democracy, complete security, [and] “complete comfort.” Throughout the nineteenth century, Billington tells us, this “frontier of myth” persisted in the American imagination as politicians, poets and novelists perpetuated a “false image” of America to their fellow

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Quoted in Ibid. The changing view of the North American native or “Indian” can be traced in the collected documents in Wilcomb E. Washburn, ed. and intro., The Indian and the White Man (Garden City, NY: Doubleday-Anchor; 1964), esp. chapt. 8, while the image of the “Noble Savage” is discussed at some length in R.F. Berkhofer, Jr., The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Random House-Vintage Books; 1979), pp. 73-80.

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As one pioneer reflected: “When this home-building and land-clearing is accomplished, a faithful picture would reveal not only changes that have been wrought, but a host of prematurely broken-down men and women, besides an undue proportion resting peacefully in country graveyards;” quoted in M.B. Davidson, Life in America, i, p. 158.

citizens and the world. He further admits that there also is “little doubt that Turner was influenced by the misconceptions of his day, and that many of the more romantic effusions in his essays were inspired by the distorted picture of the West with which he was familiar.”<sup>52</sup> Indeed, in 1894 Turner himself dubbed the frontier as much “a state of mind” promoting a constant pressure for expansion as a moving line of settlement.<sup>53</sup>

Again, Alistair Hennessy, a scholar long interested in the relationship between myth and history in the modern period and in the social function of historians in different societies, basically agrees with Billington. “The case of Frederick Jackson Turner and the extraordinary place he has occupied in American historiography,” Hennessy writes, “illustrates more clearly than possibly that of any other historian in the last hundred years the interweaving of history and myth,” the latter being fueled by “the optimism born of revolutionary messianism [which] bred a faith among people in their own institutions.” It remains, he notes, “an uphill struggle to escape from these assumptions” and like David Newbury, Hennessy warns that frontiers encourage dichotomies and “are invitations to Manichaeian schemes of thought.” He believes that historians have a responsibility “to help us escape from these shackles,” and that comparative frontier studies combine “with new insights derived from ethnohistorians and anthropologists ... [to] make this task

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<sup>52</sup>

R.A. Billington, The American Frontier, pp. 34-35.

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Frederick Jackson Turner, “Problems in American History,” in F.J. Turner, The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner (Madison, MI: University of Michigan; 1938), p. 83.

more rewarding.”<sup>54</sup>

Billington admits these distortions of myth, but argues that they “cannot diminish the importance of the actual frontier:” if it failed to reproduce the yeoman farmers of the type “that cluttered nineteenth-century novels,” it still, “to some degree at least,” had its impact on the institutions and the characteristics of the pioneers.<sup>55</sup> In fact, despite the importance of frontier institutions in their theories, some have argued that “both Turner and Webb, like many Americans since, were preoccupied not so much with frontiers as with frontiersmen” or, rather, with “the growth of American manhood and its national history.”<sup>56</sup>

Like every other aspect of the frontier thesis, the model of the “frontiersman” and his role is also a subject of controversy. Yet however they evaluate the reality of Turner’s American frontier, others still see considerable value in his image of the frontiersman. Commentating on his famous passage on the emergence of the true American, Sinologist Owen Lattimore observed: “Turner celebrates the manner in which frontiersmen emerge in a frontier environment in a passage that is of interest to all students of frontier history,

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A. Hennessy, The Frontier in Latin American History, p. 3. As pointed out above, he is contrasting the United States with Latin America, which he argues has produced no unified vision of “the frontier” or myth of “the frontiersman.”

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R.A. Billington, The American Frontier, p. 35.

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C.R. Whittaker, Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 5.

because it is a description of that ambivalent 'man of the border' who is to be found also on the Great Wall frontier of China, the Cossack frontier of Russia, the frontier of German advance against the Slavs," and so on.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, as Turner suggests and Igor Kopytoff states baldly: "To be a frontiersman is to be an entrepreneur." If in Africa this characteristic found its outlet mainly on the social and political plane, matters were different on the American frontier. There, typically, Kopytoff writes, "independent individuals and small nuclear families lived an isolated existence in the wilderness," and entrepreneurship was largely technological and economic in nature thanks to the contrast between frontier conditions and those of home.<sup>58</sup>

Here we also might recall Kopytoff's "law" that in reality, any frontier "is made by frontiersmen," and its corollary that, whether or not "an area could become a frontier ... depended on the potential balance of forces and skills between [frontiersmen] intruders and [indigenous] hosts." For when the space into which the pioneers expand is already populated, the intruders usually have to "overcome the constraints by sheer military superiority." This is especially the case, Kopytoff insists, "on most of the vital frontiers in history, where the intruders had to deal with fundamentally different populations,"

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Owen Lattimore, "The Frontier in History," in Owen Lattimore, Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers, 1929-1958 (Oxford: Oxford University, 1962), p. 489. The passage in question, Turner's description of how the "wilderness masters the colonist," is quoted in full on p. 285 above.

<sup>58</sup>

I. Kopytoff, "Introduction," African Frontiers, p. 40.

such as the Russians in Siberia, the Spanish conquistadores in North America, the Boers in South Africa, or various groups of southeast Asian farmers with the so-called “tribals.”<sup>59</sup>

Kopytoff further argues that these “frontiersmen” were usually (but not necessarily always) “socially produced, so to speak, by the metropolises.” A student of African history, he believes that on that continent, natural, cultural and social factors mean that “societies were so constructed that they systematically produced frontiersmen” and promoted “the continuous re-creation of frontiers.” This he saw as a result of the fact that African social groups, from kin groups to chieftains and kingdoms, show a consistent tendency to fission and segment.” Consequently, the formation of new social groups as offshoots of old ones has been a constant theme in the histories of African societies -- histories filled with the movement of the disgruntled, the victimized, the exiles, the refugees, the losers in internecine struggles, the adventurous, and the ambitious.” But whether their original unit was large or small, stable or unstable, the frontiersmen still “usually came from an established society,” which Kopytoff calls “their metropole;” that (as noted above) they carried its social values with them; and that they invariably set out to replicate the society they had left within an “institutional vacuum” on the frontier. The same was true of their “co-frontiersmen,” who “came from the same or other metropolises, abutting more or less

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<sup>59</sup>

Ibid., pp. 17, 28.

closely on the frontier.”<sup>60</sup>

Above I noted that Kopytoff departs from Turner with regard to the culture of the frontier. Whereas the former saw it as being basically radicalizing in that it created the conditions for American democracy, Kopytoff suggests that since frontiers replicate the society of the metropole, they are basically conservative. Utopians, he points out, may often be attracted by the idea of a frontier, but they usually live in the metropole. So whatever the motives animating the frontiersman, as a rule they themselves are not utopians and “the yearning to construct a designed and utterly new social order is very rarely one of them.”<sup>61</sup>

Instead, the most frequent motive behind migration to a frontier “is culturally (if not necessarily politically) a conservative one -- to secure a way of life that is culturally legitimate and desirable but that is, for some reason, unattainable at home.” In other

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Ibid., pp. 17-18, 26. For another view of this process see David Newbury’s comments above. In their tendency to reproduce, Kopytoff’s metropolises are not dissimilar to the Greek “mother-cities,” who founded overseas city-colonies from the 700s BC on throughout the Mediterranean, or to the early colonial “commonwealths” and townships of New England where “the expanding settlements spawned new colonies;” A. Taylor, American Colonies (New York: Penguin; 2002), p. 165. For more on New England also see Louis B. Wright’s earlier The Atlantic Frontier: Colonial American Civilization, 1607-1763 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University; 1959, 1970), pp. 127-138. On the Greek experience the classic study is John Boardman’s The Greeks Overseas (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin; 1964).

<sup>61</sup>

There were, in fact, utopian communities on the American frontier; see, for example, Robert V. Hine, California’s Utopian Colonies (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1953, 1966).

words, the main task of “social construction on the frontier” is usually “to replicate metropolitan patterns in terms favorable to oneself.” In this manner, as well as “in a broad cultural-historical perspective,” a frontier “may act to conserve, reinforce, and revitalize the central values of the regional political culture.” Furthermore, since frontiersmen “bring with them pre-existing conceptions of social order,” and since “the society that they construct cannot be explained without reference to this model,” the societies of different frontiers vary in accord with the individual histories and cultures of the home metropolises – a point he accuses some anthropologists of missing when they treat a social system as isolated in space and time. So whatever the similarities in the dynamics of various frontiers, Kopytoff concludes that the social-cultural givens are what provides the constructed social order of each frontier with “most elementary kind of legitimation – the shaping of the society into something that is perceived, culturally, as ‘normal’ and ‘human.’”<sup>62</sup>

Before leaving the frontiersman-pioneer, one aspect of this figure’s outlook and assumptions deserves further stress. Alistair Hennessy insists that the American “frontiersman of legend is the reductio ad absurdum of the individualistic ethic.” He argues that “when Turner refers to America as being another name for ‘opportunity’, he is saying something more profound than when he says it is the breeding ground of democracy.” This is because democracy and opportunity “are not synonymous as many

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<sup>62</sup>

I. Kopytoff, “Introduction,” The African Frontier, pp. 33, 39.

nineteenth-century North Americans liked to believe. Opportunity on the frontier too often meant ignoring the claims of those who did not fit into his tidy evolutionary scheme.”<sup>63</sup> I have already stressed the rarity of geographical frontiers that are “open,” in Turner’s sense of vacant. This means that in most cases the advancing lines of intruding pioneers, Turner’s included, commonly met with resistance that had to be overcome by organized armed force. As Hennessy puts it: “Frontier expansion involves physical displacement and cultural deprivation for the indigenous inhabitants.” This is true even when it is unintentional. Such was the case with the ruination of Central Mexican Valley’s crops by Spain’s imported herds, and with the destruction of the Plains Indians’ buffalo herds. And he adds that the new settlers usually “feel little sympathy for those they displace” and equate the “advance of ‘civilization’ ... with their own well-being.”<sup>64</sup>

It is perhaps no surprise to find that this characteristic also has wide-spread validity. “If the immigrants’ own relations had a certain moral foundation,” warned Kopytoff, “such a foundation was lacking in their relations with their hosts – some of them immigrants like themselves, others living in long-established societies.” For when the the

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<sup>63</sup>

A. Hennessy, The Frontier in Latin American History, p. 4; also see Mody C. Boatright, “The Myth of Frontier Individualism,” Southwestern Social Science Quarterly, 22 (June 1941), pp. 14-32. One might also add that in frontier conditions, as in many other situations, cooperation is as vital as individual action.

<sup>64</sup>

A. Hennessy, The Frontier in Latin American History, p. 43. Thus, he adds, “those beyond the frontier are regulated to the status of non-people or, in the Spanish phrase, gente sin razon.”



frontiersmen moved in among aliens, the indigenous or “host population was part of the new environment with which they had to cope,” and for them this “challenge was primarily pragmatic rather than moral.” On most frontiers in the Americas, Australia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia, there was considerable distance between the moral, cultural and technological systems of the newly intruded-settlers and indigenous populations. Yet in African conditions, Kopytoff points out, “the cultural distance was apt to be small” so that usually “the immigrant group was on the one hand free of moral and social constraints in the pursuits of its interests and, on the other, capable of dealing with the surrounding population in terms of common cultural understandings.” But unfortunately, these last often facilitated conquest rather than precluded conflict.<sup>65</sup>

### **Frontiers and Borders**

Meanwhile, a recognition of the mythical status of many frontiers and frontiersmen brings us back to the question as to whether or not Turner’s theory as such retains any serious analytical value for today’s scholars. As noted, many students of the American past now prefer to replace “frontier” with “borderland,” a term that seemingly lacks the former’s mythic implications and other historiographic baggage. Even so, as indicated by many of the authorities cited above, scholars in fields far removed from the history of the United States still seem instinctively convinced that in one way or another, “frontiers” of various kinds have played important roles in the history of humanity.

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<sup>65</sup> I. Kopytoff, “Introduction,” The African Frontier, p. 27.

For example, the classicist C.R. Whittaker considers the United States to be “the one place where a more interesting historiography of frontier studies might have been conceived, since the early pioneers had faced something not unlike the experience of the Romans in their expansion westward.” Whether or not Turner was aware of such a comparison in 1893 when he spoke the frontier as “the meeting place between savagery and civilization” is uncertain. But, Whittaker points out, when Turner enlarged his definition in 1894 to liken the frontier to a “state of mind” that “created a constant tendency to expand,” he compared the American experience of “the ever retreating Great West” to that of the Greeks as they crossed the Mediterranean.<sup>66</sup> So before proceeding further, it is worth looking once again for at least a minimalist definition that is applicable outside of the Westward Movement of American pioneers.

Throughout the diverse examples just mentioned, one theme remains constant. In defining “frontier” historians generally agree that the term refers to a zone, usually ill-defined, rather than a fixed boundary or border.<sup>67</sup> Over the last two decades the literature

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C.R. Whittaker, Frontiers of the Roman Empire, p. 5, referring to Turner’s closing paragraph of his essay “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in his essay collection The Frontier in American History, p. 38. This reads in part: “What the Mediterranean Sea was to the Greeks, breaking the bond of custom, offering new experiences, calling out new institutions and activities, that and more, the ever repeating frontier has been to the United States directly, and to the nations of Europe more remotely.”

<sup>67</sup>

Whittaker argues “the American experience ... had the virtue of clarifying the distinction between state limits and pioneering frontiers; Frontiers of the Roman Empire, p. 5. Other representative comments on this issue are John Coakley, “National Territories and

on these issues has expanded dramatically, in part reflecting the rise of such new fields as “cultural” and “gender studies” with their range of new perspectives.<sup>68</sup> Even so, when these studies concern the importance of border regions and their landscapes, the focus is on cross-border activities. This, in fact, merely represents a recognition of the insight of Lattimore, Webb and others that a frontier zone was not so much a barrier as an area of interpenetration at many levels. Or as C.R. Whittaker puts it, a frontier is “‘not a line to stop at, but an area inviting entrance,’ by definition never still – a process, not an area or

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Cultural Minorities: Conflicts of Principle in the Formation of States in Europe,” West European Politics, 5 (1982), No. 4, 35-36; Alistair Lamb, Asian Frontiers: Studies in a Continuing Problem (London: Pall Mall; 1968), 4-6; J.R.V. Prescott, Political Frontiers and Boundaries, 1-8; and Peter Sahlins, Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees (Berkeley, CA: University of California; 1989), 4-5, among many others.

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Typical of the range within this growing literature are the above-cited S.W. Green and S.M. Perlman, eds. The Archaeology of Frontiers and Boundaries; Stephen J. Hornsby, Victor Konrad and James J. Herlan, eds., The Northeastern Borderlands: Five Centuries of Interaction (Fredericton, NB: University of Maine-Acadiensis; 1989); Victor Konrad, The Borderlands of the United States and Canada (Sackville, NB: Centre for Canadian Studies, Mount Allison University; 1992); the “Borderlands Supplement,” New Statesman and New Society, (London), 19 June 1992; Denis Rumley and Julian Minghi, Geography of Borderscapes (New York: Routledge; 1993); Hastings Donnay and Thomas M. Wilson, eds., Border Approaches: Anthropological Perspectives on Frontiers (Latham, MD: University Press of America; 1994); P. Ganster, et al., Borders and Border Regions in Europe and North Americas (San Diego, CA: San Diego State University; 1997); Thomas H. Wilson and Hastings Donnay, eds., Border Identities: Nations and States at International Frontiers (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1998); Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid, eds., New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons (Montreal, PQ, and Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen’s University; 2005); and other titles mentioned in this chapter.

a boundary.”<sup>69</sup>

Bearing this in mind, we might begin by conceiving of a frontier as being the leading territorial edge of a dynamic state or society that is expanding into a new (for that society) geographical area or region. This last may be “open” (or largely unpopulated); already occupied by another, potentially hostile population; and/or the “frontier” (or zone of expansion) of two or more equally dynamic, rival states or societies (that is, what Bolton calls a “borderland”). Whatever the case, once the expansion halts – whether because of Lattimore’s “ecological” limits, military constraints, or political accords – the “leading edge” becomes fixed along a recognized geographical boundary-line which we call a “border” or (usually in a military sense) a “frontier” in the conventional European sense. At this point, according to Adelman and Aron, the former “borderland” is transformed by that demarcated and defined boundary into a “bordered land.”<sup>70</sup>

Nonetheless, the adjoining region, on both sides of that boundary, may retain its “zonal”

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C.R. Whittaker, Frontiers of the Roman Empire, p.5, quoting W.P. Webb, The Great Frontier, p. 2. Whittaker notes that “Turner gave birth to the theme, [which was] developed in ... Webb’s The Great Plains (1931).” On Owen Lattimore see his “The Frontier in History,” pp. 470-471, 482-483, while other studies specifically devoted to this issue include Raimondo Strassoldo, From Barrier to Junction: Towards a Sociological Theory of Borders (Gorizia: ISIG; 1970), and Oscar J. Martinez, Across Boundaries: Transborder Interaction in Comparative Perspective (El Paso, TX: Texas Western Press; 1986). On the situation since 9/11, see Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, ed., Borderlands: Comparing Border Security in North America and Europe (Ottawa: University of Ottawa; 2007).

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J. Adelman and S. Aron, “From Borderlands to Borders,” p. 816.

characteristics. In this case the “bordered land” remains a “borderland” but, in today's world, it usually does so in a socio-cultural and economic, but not necessarily in a military, sense.<sup>71</sup>

Within this context the comments of American medievalist Archibald R. Lewis also are worth consideration. He argues that during the High Middle Ages, Europe in fact had two “frontiers”: an “external” and an “internal.”<sup>72</sup> The first comprised areas lying outside of the heartland, but which became incorporated within Western-Central Europe's military, political and religious sphere of influence by means of conquest and strategic colonization (such as Poland or Livonia), often by means of the time-tested means of military settlers.<sup>73</sup> By contrast, the “internal” frontier was made up of those wilderness areas within Europe's initial boundaries that simultaneously were being settled and transformed “into integral portions of the European cultural and economic landscape

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For discussions of this process see, for example, Prescott, Political Frontiers, pp. 46-50, and L. Thompson and H. Lamar, “Comparative Frontier History,” pp. 7-8.

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See his important essay “The Closing of the Medieval Frontier, 1250-1350,” Speculum, 33 (1958), 475-483, and the comments in William H. TeBrake, Medieval Frontier: Culture and Ecology in Rijnland (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University; 1985), 4-17.

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On such settlers, see Gunther E. Rothenberg, “The Habsburg Military Border System: Some Reconsiderations,” in Bela K. Kiraly and Gunther E. Rothenberg, eds., War and Society in East Central Europe I: Special Topics and Generalizations in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (New York: Brooklyn College; 1979), 361-392.

through reclamation and essentially agricultural colonization.”<sup>74</sup> Interestingly enough, in some ways Lewis’ account of external and internal medieval frontiers in Europe parallels Igor Korytoff’s division of those of sub-Saharan African into “deep” and “internal” frontiers. The first were found at the outer edge of a polity, or at the extreme of its “technology of reach,” defined in terms of a metropole’s administrative and material-technological abilities to exert control over a periphery. As such, it was often “a potential frontier,” an area “beyond the effective reach of the metropolitan power which nevertheless conceitedly claimed to control it.” Not surprisingly, such a “deep frontier” also often adjoined “a political ‘no-man’s land’” that serves as a buffer between a large metropolitan region and similarly structured and neighbouring metropolises, whose similar pretensions can cause friction and often conflict. But there also might exist internal, “quasi-frontier areas” within these larger polities, “namely, in the interstices of their territorial structures.”<sup>75</sup>

Naturally enough, in these last cases of internal frontiers both in Africa and elsewhere, the moral-cultural gap was generally much smaller than on most of the world’s external frontiers. This is because internal frontiers usually involved technologically and culturally similar populaces. Consequently, in these cases the

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<sup>74</sup>

W.H. TeBrake, Medieval Frontier, p. 21. On "settlement frontiers" also see the more general discussion in J.R.V. Prescott, Political Frontiers, pp. 36-41.

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I. Kopytoff, “Introduction,” The African Frontier, pp. 27-30.

intruders' successes usually "depended less on physical superiority and more on organizational and political skills." While in Africa these internal entities were usually "vassal or tributary polities" which might seek immigrants for their own "peripheral frontier-like areas," and whose chances of becoming independent "within the sphere of the metropole's power were slim," unless the latter faced disintegration. In that case, of course, nascent polities on the deep frontier might achieve independence as well.<sup>76</sup> But in both such cases this process did indeed have parallels in some of powerful vassal polities that from time to time arose in medieval Europe.<sup>77</sup>

If we apply Lewis' two-frontier concept to North America, we see the westward movement as involving a series of Lewisite "external frontiers," which were generally military in nature, and which in time became "internal" (that is, mining, settlement and eventually, urban) frontiers. Similar progressions can be identified elsewhere. One such case is the Muscovite expansion into Ukraine (which translates as "The Frontier") and Siberia. Another is China's southern advance up to and into Vietnam. In both cases a series of external frontiers were transformed into internal ones that then were successfully integrated. Conversely, China long failed to fully incorporate the restless regions north of the Great Wall, which consequently continued to spawn new military

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<sup>76</sup>

Ibid.

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For examples of both situations see Wim Blockmans' discussion of the rise of European state system in his A History of Power in Europe: Peoples, Markets, States (Antwerp and New York: Fonds Mercator Paribas-Henry N. Abrams; 1997).

threats and serve as launch-pads for raids and invasions.<sup>78</sup> Again, the inability of the Crusader States in the Holy Land to successfully develop their “internal frontier” undoubtedly contributed to their military weakness and eventual collapse.<sup>79</sup>

Otherwise, as Igor Kopytoff points out, when pioneers hope to “engage in significant new social construction on a frontier,” their “group had to disengage itself radically from the controls of its parent society and find an area whose political system would not preclude the building of an independent settlement.” Yet such “open” geographical frontier regions, truly “empty or nearly empty of all inhabitants and presenting an objective political vacuum,” the conditions that would permit this, were few and far between.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, Turner’s “frontier transformations” were never as

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The urban stage of the westward movement is discussed in Richard C. Wade, The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1870 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 1959). On Muscovy-Russia’s frontiers, see the works cited elsewhere and more recently, Michael Khodarkovsky, Russia’s Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 2002). On China, apart from Lattimore’s essays, see Richard von Glahn, The Country of Streams and Grottoes: Expansion, Settlement, and the Civilizing of the Sichuan Frontier in Song Times (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 1987), and most recently by Leo K. Shin, The Making of the Chinese State: Ethnicity and Expansion on the Ming Borderlands (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University; 2006), for southern examples, and Arthur Waldron, The Great Wall of China: From History to Myth (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1990) for developments in the north.

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On the failure of Crusader settlement see Jonathan Phillips, “The Latin East, 1098-1291,” in Jonathan Riley-Smith, ed., The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades (Oxford: Oxford University; 1995), 112-119.

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I. Kopytoff, African Frontiers, p. 28.



unconstrained as he suggested. But whatever view one takes of his explanations of American democracy and supposed rise of a self-reliant individualism, or of Cossack and Siberian regional self-assertiveness, the overall results of Russia's frontier experience obviously were very different from America's. If this in part undoubtedly reflects the very different political traditions and institutions of the Muscovite-Russian centre, in part it obviously also results from the much greater military power of Russia's borderland rivals (the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Crimean Tatar-Ottoman combination) as compared to most of the North American aborigines.<sup>81</sup>

But if examples of a truly "open" frontier environment, in Turner's sense, are rare, they are not non-existent. Writing of Africa, Kopytoff notes that there were two such – one founded by escaped Bantu slaves in Somalia during the 1800s, and the other by the mixed group of immigrants of Mto Wa Mbu in Tanganyika in the early 1900s.<sup>82</sup> To date, this writer can only suggest two further examples: Iceland in the 900s, and the French

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The pressures on Muscovy often are said to have created a "service state," a view argued by Richard Hellie in "The Structure of Modern Russian History: Toward a Dynamic Model," Russian History/Histoire Russe, 4 (1977), No. 1, 1-22; his more extensive Enserfment and Military Change in Russia (Chicago: University of Chicago; 1971); and Carol Belkin Stevens, Soldiers on the Steppe: Army Reform and Social Change in Early Modern Russia (De Kalb, IL: Northern Illinois University; 1995). For a briefer and generally unimpressive effort to apply Turner to Russia, see Joseph L. Wieczinski, The Russian Frontier: The Impact of Borderlands on Early Russian History (Charlottesville: University of Virginia; 1976).

<sup>82</sup>

I. Kopytoff, "Introduction," African Frontiers, p. 28, and Chapters 8 (Somalia) and 9 (Tanganyika).

settlers in Acadia or Nova Scotia during the 1600s. In the first case, the pioneering Norse settlers arrived to find only a mere handful of Irish hermits already in situ. Since these latter disappeared immediately, the new colonists had a century of virtual isolation in which to develop their political and social institutions, the famous Althing (traditionally dating from 930 to become “Europe’s First Parliament”) included. The situation in Acadia was, of course, quite different. But thanks to the French settlers’ adoption of their distinctive dike-land form agriculture, they moved into an ecological niche which permitted cooperation rather than promoted conflict with the pre-existing aboriginal inhabitants.<sup>83</sup> On most frontiers, however, the pioneer-intruders found no “vacuum.” In establishing their settlements they therefore faced varying degrees of conflict with pre-existing populations. Intermittent warfare usually was endemic and in most case, as

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On these exceptions see Gunnar Karlson, Iceland's 1100 Years: History of a Marginal Society (Reykjavik: Mal og menning; 2000), part I, pp. 9-89, and John R. Hjalmarsson, History of Iceland: From the Settlement to the Present Day (Reykjavik: Iceland Review; 1993), pp. 9-26. The Acadian experience is discussed in Jean Daigle, "Acadia from 1604 to 1763: An Historical Synthesis," in J. Daigle, ed., Acadia of the Maritimes: Thematic Studies from the Beginnings to the Present (Moncton, NB: Universite de Moncton; 1995), pp. 11-12, and David R. Jones, "From Frontier to Borderland: The Acadian Community in a Comparative Context, 1605-1710," Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society Journal 7 (2004), pp. 15-37. The Acadians, of course, suffered from the wars waged by outsiders over their homeland. Otherwise, it is interesting that both Iceland and Acadie were northern agricultural colonies, in which fishing was allocated a merely secondary role. More surprising still, over their first 100 years, they enjoyed near identical and rapid rates of demographic growth. For a general perspective on this latter issue, see J.W. Eaton and A.J. Mayer, "The Social Biology of Very High Fertility Among the Hutterites," Human Biology, 25 (1953), pp. 206-264. The Hutterites, too, are a relatively closed, agricultural community of European pioneer immigrants in North America.

noted earlier, the frontiersmen-pioneers eventually succeeded only by overcoming the indigenous inhabitants through superior military force (which often entailed relying on their home metropolises).

As the histories of Muscovite-Tartar, Eurasian-Chinese and to some extent, at least to 1763, of the Anglo-French frontiers in northeastern North America demonstrate, it is not uncommon for native “borderland” or “trans-frontier” groupings to enjoy a military advantage. Indeed, on occasion borderlanders may even hold the balance of power within a frontier region separating two imperial powers. In many such cases an imperial (usually sedentary) power may seek to maintain its position through a system of gifts, often characterized as “tribute.” The exchange of gifts, or transmission of tribute, usually is accompanied by symbolic rituals and ceremonies that have implications regarding alliances, presumed allegiance and claims of sovereignty in the eyes of one or both parties. But as a few examples indicate, perceptions of the significance of such rituals may well vary over time and from place to place.

Before 1480, for example, a Muscovite ruler’s payment of tribute to the Mongols’ Great Khan clearly implied a recognition of the former’s vassal status. Yet similar payments to the Crimean Khan in the 1500s did not (at least in Russian eyes) have the same significance.<sup>84</sup> Again, to Chinese eyes the nomadic Mongols’ tribute payments to

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On Russian “tribute” or *dan* paid to the Mongols/Tatars see John Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia, 1200-1304* (London and New York: Longman; 1983); Charles J. Halperin, *Russia and the Golden Horde: The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian*

the "Son of Heaven" also indicated their submission. Yet it is doubtful that the "vassals" themselves felt seriously constrained by their actions, and they certainly expected lavish gifts in return for their proffered tribute. Similar situation existed elsewhere, as in North America. There European and colonial gift-givers believed they were ensuring the allegiance (vassalage) of their aboriginal opposites, a concept which the latter either misunderstood or rejected. But however different were the participants' perceptions of these ambiguous rituals, these systems were invariably a de facto means of trade, and even of cultural interaction.<sup>85</sup>

### **Borderlands, Bordering States and Borderers**

A frontier or borderland zone, then, may be as much a region inviting entry, interaction and interpenetration as it is a barrier to communicating with the aliens beyond.<sup>86</sup> Equally

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History (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 1985); K.V. Bazilevich, Vnrshniaia politika Russkogo tsentralizovannogo gosudarstva vtoraia polovina XV veka [The Foreign Policy of the Russian Centralizing State in the Second Half of the XV Century](Moscow: Izd. MGU; 1952); A.A. Novosel'skii, Bor'ba moskovskogo gosudarstva v Tatarami v pervoi polovine XVII veka [The Struggle of the Muscovite State in the First half of the XVII Century](Moscow: Izd. "Nauka;" 1948); and A.W. Fisher, The Russian Annexation of the Crimea, 1772-1783 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1970).

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Compare, for example, Wilber R. Jacobs, Diplomacy and Indian Gifts: Anglo-French Rivalry Along the Ohio and Northwest Frontiers, 1748-1763 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University; 1950); O. Lattimore, "The Frontier in History," pp. 482-484; and Mark Mancall, "The Ch'ing Tribute System: An Interpretative Essay," in John K. Fairbank, ed., The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 1968), pp. 63-89, 299-301.

<sup>86</sup>

On this aspect see C.R. Whittaker, Frontiers of the Roman Empire, p. 5; the comments

common, especially since 1400, are cases of conflicts arising in regions in which the frontiers, colonial or otherwise, of rival imperial states or societies collide in a region desired and frequently claimed by both. In the spirit of Adelman's and Aron's nomenclature, I would term these rivals as "bordering lands" or "bordering powers." As Bolton rightly pointed out, his own and similar "borderlands" usually begin as "contested frontier zones" between expanding linguistic-cultural groups, states or cultures.<sup>87</sup> Some, of course, may be supported by the "bordering states" to serve as "buffer zones" (such as Afghanistan between Russian Central Asia and British India).<sup>88</sup> At the same time, in colonial environments the immediate "bordering states" could in fact be colonies and so often fill the part of direct or indirect agents of more distant imperial powers. In this role they serve as intermediate actors. Yet on occasion such

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scattered throughout Owen Lattimore's writings in Studies in Frontier History; as well as the study of Sechin Jagchid and Van Jay Symons, Peace, War and Trade along the Great Wall: Nomadic-Chinese Interaction through Two Millennia (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 1989). For similar interactions elsewhere see Sven Tagil, "The Question of Border Regions in Western Europe: An Historical Background," West European Politics, 5 (1982), No. 4, pp. 19-20.

<sup>87</sup>

For a good summary of Bolton's view of "borderlands," see J.F. Bannon, "The Spanish Borderlands, Another Kind of Frontier," published as chapter 1 in Bannon, Spanish Borderlands. pp. 1-7, and the other works cited earlier.

<sup>88</sup>

See, for example, Dorothy Woodman, Himalayan Frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian and Russian Rivalries (New York: Praeger; 1969); Mahnaz Z. Ispahani, Roads and Rivals: The Politics of Access in the Borderlands of Asia (London: I.B. Tauris; 1989), and Andre Singer, Lords of the Khyber: The Story of the North-West Frontier (London: Faber and Faber; 1984).

“bordering colonies” (like Massachusetts and Quebec from 1689 to 1763) might also act directly in their own interests as well and, by so doing, involve their distant backers in the local borderland disputes occasioned by indeterminate or shifting lines of frontier.<sup>89</sup>

In these situations, and especially those involving colonies of far distant if powerful imperial rivals, the metropolitan governments often found it difficult (in terms of political will or practical logistics) to mobilize and apply the resources demanded by an intermittent but ongoing border conflict. This explains the independence, official or otherwise, frequently enjoyed by governors of the intermediate “bordering” colonies in dealing with their immediate frontier or borderland neighbours. Here the policies of Massachusetts toward Acadia are typical, but no more so than the actions of the Tsar's expansionist commanders in Central Asia during 1855-1885, or the South African backers of Dr. Jameson's invasion of Transvaal in 1895.<sup>90</sup>

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An excellent example of an independent colonial governor in New France is the Comte de Frontenac, whose career is chronicled in W.J. Eccles, Frontenac: The Courtier Governor (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart; 1959). The career of his Massachusetts opposite in 1690 is detailed in Emerson W. Baker and John G. Reid, The New England Knight: Sir William Phips, 1651-1695 (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1998). The overall military-political context of their actions, and relations between Quebec and New England, is conveniently provided in Ian K. Steele, Guerillas and Grenadiers: The Struggle for Canada, 1689-1760 (Toronto: Ryerson Press; 1760), or in Robert Leckie, “A Few Acres of Snow”: The Saga of the French and Indian Wars (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons; 1999).

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Both John B. Brebner's New England's Outpost: Acadia Before the Conquest of Canada (New York: Columbia University; 1927), and George A. Rawlyk's Nova Scotia's Massachusetts: A Study of Massachusetts-Nova Scotian Relations, 1630-1774 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University; 1978), provide examples of this phenomenon in

Apart from exceptions such as the Athenian Attic defenses of the late 400s-300s BC, China's Great Wall (or more correctly, walls) and Rome's "limes,"<sup>91</sup> the containment or elimination of frontier zones or borderlands by the creation of fixed, surveyed and demarcated political borders is comparatively recent. Even more so is the demand that political borders accord with some perceived ethnic or cultural boundary, however disputed. To a large extent, of course, both processes parallel the rise of the modern, compact "nation state." For until at least 1800 most states (Europe's included) were "polyethnic" in terms of their populations, and were dynastic monarchies in terms of government. Furthermore, most such rulers (including the government of the Dutch Republic) had claims on territories beyond the apparent borders of their core states. In this situation, "citizenship" was defined by loyalty to the monarch's person rather than consciousness of an ethnic or national identity, and the transfer of border territories (with their inhabitants) from ruler to ruler was relatively commonplace.<sup>92</sup> As for borderlines,

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the course of "Acadia or Nova Scotia's" relationship with Massachusetts. On South Africa, Elizabeth Pakenham recounts the tale of Jameson's Raid (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; 1960), and David MacKenzie outlines the independent actions of one Russian Central Asian commander in his The Lion of Tashkent: The Career of General M.G. Cherniaev (Athens, GA: University of Georgia; 1974).

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C.R. Whittaker, Frontiers of the Roman Empire provides a stimulating review of Rome's frontiers in particular, and of frontiers in general. On the Great Wall see the items cited on China above, and on Athens, see Josiah Ober, Fortress Attica: Defense of the Athenian Land Frontier, 404-302 (Leiden: E.J. Brill; 1965).

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These issues are discussed at greater length in M. Foucher, L'invention des frontières (Paris: Fondation pour les études de Défense nationale; 1986), especially pp. 26-34;

in the absence of “natural frontiers” marked out by coastlines or great rivers, these long remained vaguely defined and inconsistent in terms of identifiable sovereignty.<sup>93</sup>

Serious attempts at “rationalizing” Europe's frontiers made real progress only as a

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Jeremy Black, The Rise of the European Powers, 1679-1793 (London: Edward Arnold; 1990), 150-185; and William H. McNeill, Polyethnicity and Ethnicity in the Modern World (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1986), 33-35. Other recent important studies on the rise of early modern states, the question of multiethnicity, and associated issues include Roland G. Asch and Adolf M. Birke, eds., Princes, Patronage and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of the Modern Age, c. 1450-1650 (Oxford: German Historical Institute London-Oxford University; 1991); Michael J. Braddick, State Formation in Early Modern England, c.1500-1700 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 2000); Samuel Clark, States and Status: The Rise of the State and Aristocratic Power in Western Europe; J.H. Elliott, “A Europe of Composite Monarchies,” Past and Present 137 (1992), pp. 48-71; Thomas Ertman, Birth of the Leviathan: Building States and Regimes in Medieval and Early Modern Europe (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1997, 1999); Mark Greengrass, ed., Conquest and Coalescence: The Shaping of the State in Early Modern Europe (London: Edward Arnold; 1991); H.G. Koenigsberger, “Composite States, Representative Institutions and the American Revolution,” Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research, 62 (1989), pp. 135-153; Bruce D. Porter, War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics; and Charles Tilly, Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992 (Oxford: Blackwell; 1990, 1994).

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On the issue of “natural frontiers,” which are most commonly associated with French policy, see Febvre, “Frontiere,” pp. 214-215, and Peter Sahlins, “Natural Frontiers Revisited: France's Boundaries since the Seventeenth Century,” American Historical Review, 95 (1990), 1423-1451; Daniel Nordman, “Geographie ou histoire d’une frontiere: La frontiere franco-belge (Note critique),” Annales, 32 (May-June 1977), No. 3, pp. 433-444; and David Buisseret, “The Cartographic Definition of France’s Eastern Boundary in the Early Seventeenth Century,” Imago Mundi (London, 1984), No. 36, pp. 72-80. Otherwise, as Sven Tagil points out, the term “‘natural boundary’ has all too many connotations, too easily suggests bogus associations, and has an altogether different significance in different epochs and in different milieux.” Thus a river may serve as a means of communication, or as a barrier. And besides, he adds, all the boundaries under discussion are “created by human beings and between human beings – and are thus all, in that sense, artificial...;” S. Tagil, “The Question of Border Regions in Western Europe: An Historical Background,” p. 19.



result of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars. Even then, however, the Balkans remained a Pandora's Box that plague us to this day.<sup>94</sup> Yet this late general date in fixing state boundaries also reflects the fact that until the mid- to late-1700s, existing techniques of map-making made the precise recording of agreed-on “borders” or “frontier-lines” difficult, and in some regions neigh-on-impossible. As a result, until 1800 the “borders” of most European states still can better be described as “frontier zones” in which the fixing of a final, demarcated boundary-line remained a matter of considerable contention.<sup>95</sup> Even when the line was more or less fixed (as with the Anglo-

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In this regard, Sven Tagil argues that in the “study of the historical development of borders and border regions” we must consider “when and how borders came into existence rather than some form of phenomological structuring.” He proposes the system of classification offered by Norman Pound in 1963. This sees four main groups of state borders relative to the cultural development of the border areas: (1) antecedent boundaries, which existed before the development of the cultural landscape; (2) subsequent boundaries, drawn after and in accord with a cultural dividing line; (3) superimposed boundaries, drawn after the cultural area’s development but without regard to that line; and (4) relict boundaries, which one can still trace in the cultural landscape even if they no longer function as a political dividing line;” S. Tagil, “The Question of Border Regions in Western Europe: An Historical Background,” p. 19.

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On cartographic developments and the problems of demarcating frontiers, see Lloyd A. Brown, The Story of Maps (New York: Dover; 1949, 1977), pp. 241-279; R.V. Tooley, Maps and Map-Makers (New York: Dorset Press; 1949, 1970), Ken MacMillan, Sovereignty and Possession in the English New World: The Legal Foundations of Empire, 1576-1640 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 2006), chapter 5; as well as the comments of J. Black, Rise of the European Powers, pp. 192-197, and more extensively, in his Maps and History: Constructing Images of the Past (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1997).

Scottish “Borders” by the 1500s), cross-border conflict continued on a regular basis.<sup>96</sup>

Faced with these problems, the rulers of many “bordering states” per se have resorted to the formal creation of administrative frontier “zones,” “districts” or “regimes,” known in medieval times as “marks” or “marches,” with their own distinctive “borderer” societies. When peripheral, cross-border conflict achieved the level of near-continual warfare on an extended or especially exposed border (border zone), the later often was transformed into a “military border” or a “military frontier system.” Since ancient Egypt and the Roman limes, these commonly have combined regularly garrisoned fortresses, fortified posts and mobile field forces, such as Rome’s frontier legions or Muscovy’s “hosts” of gentry-militiamen, backed by the soldier-farmer settlers mentioned earlier. These latter made up a class of local frontiersmen (e.g., Byzantium’s akritoi, the Crusader Military Orders, Austria’s Croatian borderers, Russia’s later Cossack “armies,” and to some degree, New Brunswick’s transplanted regiments of Loyalists in Canada). In this manner the frontier zone or district became a line both of early-warning and initial defense that gained time to allow the field army’s mobilization in wartime, but which

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On the Anglo-Scottish border (and borderers), see Andrew Lang and John Lang, Highways and Byways in the Border (London: Macmillan; 1913); W.R. Kermack, The Scottish Borders (with Galloway) to 1603 (Edinburgh: Johnston and Bacon; 1967); John Sadler, Border Fury: England and Scotland at War, 1296-1568 (Harlow and London: Longman-Pearson; 2005, 2006); and Alistair Moffit, The Rievers: The Story of the Border Rievers (Edinburgh: Birlinn; 2007). For insights into the lore and romance of the region see Michael Brander, Scottish and Border Battles and Ballads (New York: Barnes and Noble; 1993).

served primarily as a buffer zone in times of relative peace for Byzantium, Muscovy and other similar states.<sup>97</sup>

While these military or paramilitary settlers obviously are the most intimately concerned with any struggle over a debated border zone, that conflict clearly has an impact on all elements of the region's overall population. Despite the best efforts of some borderers to preserve their lands and status by adopting a stance of de facto neutrality or, as in the case of Nova Scotia's Acadians, to obtain official recognition as "neutrals," such attempts almost invariably end in failure. For it is difficult, and usually impossible, to hold aloof during an the intermittent cross-border conflict. Even so, this friction

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Apart from the studies already mentioned, useful introductions to these frontiers and their settlers include Fergus Millar, "Emperors, Frontiers and Foreign Relations, 31 B.C. to A.D. 378," Britannia: A Journal of Romano-British and Kindred Studies, 13 (London, 1982), pp. 1-23; John Haldon, Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World (London: UCL Press; 1999); Alan Forey, "The Military Orders, 1220-1312," and Anthony Luttrell, "The Military Orders, 1312-1798," in Jonathan Riley-Smith, The Oxford Illustrated History of the Crusades (Oxford: Oxford University; 1995), pp. 184-216 and 326-364; Helen Nicolson and David Nicolle, God's Warriors: Crusaders, Saracens and the Battle for Jerusalem (Oxford: Osprey Publishing; 2005); Nicolas von Praradovich, Des Kaisers Grenzer: 300 Jahre Turkenabwehr (Vienna: F. Molden; 1970); Gunther E. Rothenberg, The Military Border in Croatia, 1522-1747 (Urbana: University of Illinois; 1960); V.A. Golobutskii, Zaporozhskoe kazachestvo [The Zaporozhian Cossacks] (Kiev: Gospolitizdat USSR; 1957); Philip Longworth, The Cossacks (London: Constable; 1969); and A.V. Chernov, Vooruzhennye sily russkogo gosudarstva v XV-XVII v.v. [The Armed Forces of the Russian State in the XV-XVII Centuries] (Moscow: Voenizdat.; 1954). For the military significance of the Loyalists see David Facey-Crowther, The New Brunswick Militia, 1787-1867 (Fredericton, NB: New Brunswick Historical Society; 1990), pp.1-17, and more extensively, Robert L. Dallison, Hope Restored: The American Revolution and the Founding of New Brunswick (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions-New Brunswick Military Heritage Project; 2003).

commonly has been balanced within the “border landscape,” as the region is often called, by parallel traditions of cross-border, and often cross-cultural, cooperation and accommodation in terms of trade, marriage, and so on.<sup>98</sup> These intra-regional patterns often persist despite the borderers’ official allegiance to one or other of the bordering polities (as in the case, for example, of the Acadians’ trade with Louisbourg as well as with New England), and even despite their formal status as combatants of the side of one of the rivals. In this regard the relations between the early Byzantine akritoi and their Moslem ghazi opposites, or those within the later Anglo-Scottish borderer community, with their shared trade (both legal and illegal) and codes of customary laws and accepted behaviour, offer striking examples.<sup>99</sup> So, too, do more recent events in other frontier-

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On border “zones” and “landscapes” see J.R.V. Prescott, Political Frontiers, pp. 51-68, 173; Thomas H. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, eds., Border Identities: Nations and States at International Frontiers, “Introduction” and pp. 7-8. Good examples of studies of a particular border “landscape” are N.J. Higham, A Frontier Landscape: The North West in the Middle Ages (Macclesfield, Cheshire: Windgather Press; 2004), and Iain MacIvor, A Fortified Frontier: Defences of the Anglo-Scottish Border (Stroud, Glouc.: Tempus Publishing; 2001).

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Customs of the Anglo-Scottish borderers are described in George MacDonald Fraser, The Steel Bonnets (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 1971), pp. 31-81, and Maureen M. Meikle, A British Frontier? Lairds and Gentlemen in the Eastern Borders, 1540-1603 (East Linton, East Lothian: Tuckwell Press; 2004), while the development of a special “border code” of laws is examined in detail by Cynthia J. Neville, Violence, Custom and Law: The Anglo-Scottish Border Lands in the Later Middle Ages (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University; 1998). The transposition of these folkways to the colonial American “backcountry” is discussed in detail in David Hackett Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York and Oxford: Oxford University; 1989, 1991), pp. 605-782, and the existence of similar patterns among the ghazi and akritoi of Anatolia is outlined in Peter F. Sugar, Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-

borderland regions such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, where periods of accommodation have been punctuated by those of intra-communal conflict.<sup>100</sup>

Aharon Ben-Ami, an Israeli scholar has developed a useful model for examining the positions of borderers in contested frontier zones. In his historical-sociological and diplomatic-cultural study of the Crusader States of medieval Palestine, he stresses that the intra- and inter-regional relations of borderers exist within a larger external and international context. For this reason, these relations must of necessity change in accord with shifts in this international environment. He therefore concludes by cautioning that a frontier or borderland people, whose leaders are not flexible enough to adapt to such environmental shifts in a timely manner, risks (and usually suffers) disaster. In an obvious warning to his fellow Israelis, he sees such a failure as a basic cause of the final collapse of the last of the Crusader States before the power of the reunited Muslim forces in the 1291. Clearly, this is a lesson that has equal resonance for students of other borderlands in East Central and Southern Europe, in the lands of the former Soviet Union, and for those

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1804 (Seattle, WA: University of Washington; 1977), pp. 9-11.

<sup>100</sup>

On Bosnia-Herzegovina see Vladimir Dedijer, The Road to Sarajevo (London: MacGibbon and Kee; 1967), pp. 27-41; Rebecca West, Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia, 2 vols. (New York: Viking; 1941), pp. 269-444; Robert D. Kaplan, Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History (New York: St. Martin's Press; 1994); and more extensively, Noel Malcolm, Bosnia: A Short History, rev. ed. (London: Macmillan; 1996). For discussions of the role of myth and past religious traditions in contemporary ethnic strife, see the wide range of essays in Paul Mojzes, ed., Religion and the War in Bosnia (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press; 1998).

of other periods, regions and peoples.<sup>101</sup>

### **Issues of Culture, Sentiment and Myth**

Much of the contemporary interest in frontier and borderland studies stems from the obvious persistence of regional or “borderland” sentiments throughout the world, both in the former “bordering states” as well as supposedly extinguished border or frontier zones. Despite the creation of apparently firm political frontiers, cross-border and hybrid cultures still flourish. One obvious example is the “Tex-Mex” culture of the Rio Grande, and the mix found all along an American-Mexican border that stretches to the Pacific.<sup>102</sup> This particular case of “hybridity” involves a fusion of two culturally distinct peoples, but other border nations (for instance, the Basques and Catalans)<sup>103</sup> have greater internal cultural

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Aharon Ben-Ami, Social Change in a Hostile Environment: The Crusaders’ Kingdom of Jerusalem (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University; 1969), especially pp. 178-188.

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See, for example, J.W House, Frontier on the Rio Grande: A Political Geography of Development and Social Deprivation (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1982); Ellwyn R. Stoddard, et al., Borderlands Sourcebook: A Guide to the Literature on Northern Mexico and American Southwest (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma; 1982); Paul Ganster, “On the Road to Independence? The United States-Mexico Border Region;” Oscar J. Martinez, “Border People and Their Cultural Roles: The Case of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands;” and Samuel Schmidt, “Stereotypes, Culture, and Cooperation in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands,” in P. Ganster, et al., Borders and Border Regions in Europe and North America, pp. 237-266, 293-298, and 299-314, respectively.

103

Mark Kurlansky, The Basque History of the World (Toronto, Ont.: Alfred A. Knopf Canada; 1999) provides a popular account (and useful bibliography) of the Basques. Other more scholarly studies include Roger Collins, The Basques (Oxford: Blackwell; 1986) for the early history, and for later periods see Rachael Bard, Navarra: The Durable Kingdom (Reno and Las Vegas, NV: University of Nevada; 1982); William A. Douglass, ed., Basque Politics: A Case Study in Ethnic Nationalism (Reno, NV:

unity. Yet all have one trait in common: the borderers involved are “peripheral” and separated by space and even culture from the “centres” or “metropolises” of their supposed nation states.

Peter Sahlins has argued convincingly that a sense of French national consciousness developed in at least one Catalan region of the Pyrenees -- the Cerdanya Valley -- earlier than in Central France.<sup>104</sup> But this may well be an exceptional case and many borderers clearly still retain their sense of regional distinctiveness.<sup>105</sup> In the words of the Canadian novelist Alistair MacLeod, for instance, inhabitants of le pays des Laurentides shared a cultural inheritance (“a body of song”) and “had more in common with one another than they had with those whom they felt controlled their destinies from the distant cities of

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Associated Faculty Press and Basque Studies Program; 1985); and Robert P. Clark, Negotiating with ETA: Obstacles to Peace in the Basque Country, 1975-1988 (Reno and Las Vegas, NV: University of Nevada; 1990). On the Catalans, see Salvador de Madariaga, Spain: A Modern History (New York: Frederick A. Praeger; 1958), esp. 177-260, and the section “Catalunya” in John Osmond and Tom Nairn, “This land is my land, this land is your land,” “Borderlands Supplement,” New Statesman and Society (19 June 1992), p. 54

104

Peter Sahlins, Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees (Berkeley, CA: University of California; 1989), and his briefer “State Formation and National Identity in the Catalan Borderlands in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in T. Wilson and H. Donnan, Border Identities, 31-61.

105

William A. Douglass, “A Western Perspective on an Eastern Interpretation of Where North Meets South,” which also appears in T. Wilson and H. Donnan, Border Identities (pp. 62-95), suggests that Sahlins’ conclusions do not hold true even in neighbouring areas of the Pyrenees. Other contributions to this volume also generally support arguments for the cultural distinctiveness of borderland peripheries. Also see J. Coakley, “National Territories and Cultural Minorities,” pp. 35-36.

Toronto and Quebec City, people who shared neither their weather, their landscape, their daily concerns, nor their sensitivities.” It was this, MacLeod maintains, that gave point to Quebec politician Real Caouette’s suggested creation of an eleventh province along the Quebec-Ontario border.<sup>106</sup>

Those convinced of the impending victory, for good or ill, of some trans-global cultural fusion and reign of universal “hybridity” may dismiss such sentiments as hopeless romanticism. The same can be said of the lingering influence of frontier and border zones over the same “bordering” and imperialist states which long battled to force their assimilation. Here the legends of the Western movie are familiar to us all, and they have parallels elsewhere. As Barry Straus and Josiah Ober point out, frontier regions like Flanders, Alsace-Lorraine and Persian Mesopotamia long served as an “ultimate, mythic

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Alistair MacLeod, No Great Mischief. A Novel (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart; 1999, pp. 147-148. He notes a similar sentiment exists in another typical case “periphery-centre” alienation -- the Madawaska region. There “the boundaries of New Brunswick, Quebec, and Maine are so close to each other that in the end they vanish within the consciousness of the region’s inhabitants” and, once again, the respective capitals are far distant. For the background of this area, see Charlotte L’Enentine Melvin, Madawaska: A Chapter in Maine-New Brunswick Relations (Madawaska, ME: Madawaska Historical Society-St. John Valley Publishing; 1975); Beatrice Chevalier Craig, “Family, Kinship and Community Formation on the Canadian-American Border: Madawaska, 1760-1848.” Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Maine, Orono, 1983, and her “Before Borderlands: Yankees, British, and the St. John Valley French,” in Stephen J. Hornsby and John G. Reid, eds., New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons (Montreal and Kingston, Ont: Ucgill-Queen’s University; 2005), pp. 74-93..



field of honor” for the British, French and Romans, respectively.<sup>107</sup> That such “romantic vestiges,” as a Marxist-Leninist might term them, clearly survive in the modern world is illustrated by a comment in 1916 by the celebrated American journalist (and later Communist) John Reed. Speaking of Serbian morale, he recorded that the Serbian soldier understood his cause, for as a baby, every day “his mother greeted him: ‘Hail, little avenger of Kosovo!’”<sup>108</sup>

In cases like this last the frontier often becomes the mythomoteur driving nationalist sentiments with the state as a whole. These ideologues frequently appropriate to themselves an antimurale role in which their state and people are cast as the bulwark of “Western Civilization” against encroachments by pagan or infidel hordes bent the destruction of the greatest glories of the human spirit. Thus, as John Armstrong points

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Barry S. Strauss and Josiah Ober, The Anatomy of Error: Ancient Military Disasters and Their Lessons for Modern Strategists (New York: St. Martin's; 1990), p. 219.

<sup>108</sup>

John Reed, The War in Eastern Europe, illus. Boardman Robinson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; 1918), pp. 39-40. Significantly, this is quoted in V. Dedijer, The Road to Sarajevo, p. 235. Apart from the works cited on Bosnia-Herzegovina cited above, Serbian nationalist myths, that of Kosovo included, are discussed in R.G.D. Laffin, The Guardians of the Gate: Historical Lectures on the Serbs, foreword Adm. E.T. Troubridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1918); Tim Judah, The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University-Nota Bene; 2000); Noel Malcolm, Kosovo: A Short History (New York: New York University; 1998, 1999); Mitja Velikonja, “Liberation Mythology: The Role of Mythology in Fanning War in the Balkans,” in P. Mojzes, ed., Religion and the War in Bosnia, pp. 20-42; Julie A. Mertus, Kosovo: How Myths and Truths Started a War (Berkeley, CA: University of California; 1999), and in a more general context, in Andre Gerlymatos, The Balkan Wars: Myth, Reality, and the Eternal Conflict (Toronto, Ont.: Stoddart Publishing; 2001).

out, the part played in the reconquista by the kingdoms of Aragon and Castile has been transformed into a Spanish nationalist claim to have saved Christian Europe from conquest by Muslim North Africa. Again, both Russians and Poles have made similar claims with regard to the dreaded Mongols, and the Hungarians and Croatians vis-a-vis the Ottoman Turks. In this last case, as the above quote illustrates, the Serbs demand at least equal credit for having sacrificed their independence in an effort to stem the Muslim Turkish tide at Kosovo in 1389, the reverberations of which still complicate the Balkan political scene.<sup>109</sup>

That such traditions persist is especially evident in the symbols associated with the ethnic nationalisms of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo in Europe, or with the destructive

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On Serbia see the sources cited in note 108, as well as the comments of John R. Lampe, Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 2000), chapters 1-3.. The Spanish antemurale tradition is discussed in J.A. Armstrong, Nation's before Nationalism, pp. 65, 72-73, 90-92; Russia's in David R. Jones, "Russian Military Traditions and the Soviet Military Establishment," in Kenneth M. Currie and Gregory Varhall, eds., The Soviet Union: What Lies Ahead. Military-Political Affairs in the 1980s (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office; 1984), pp. 25-27; Poland's in Zbigniew Kwiakiewicz, et al., A Panorama of Polish History (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers; 1982), pp. 35-37, and Norman Davies, God's Playground: A History of Poland, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), i, p. 87; Hungary in Paul Teleki, The Evolution of Hungary and Its Place In European History (New York: State University of New York at Albany; 1923), pp. 37-39, 54-75, and Paul Ignatus, Hungary (New York and Washington, DC: Praeger Publishers; 1972), pp. 28-38. The roles of other Balkan and East European states is discussed in W.H. McNeill, Europe's Steppe Frontier. It is interesting to note the role military disasters and defeats, rather than victories, often play in creating national self-awareness. Here we might cite Gallipoli for New Zealand and Australia, Beaumont-Hamel for Newfoundland, Pearl Harbor for the United States, and wonder why Dieppe never achieved a similar status for Canada.

“tribalisms” of Rwanda’s and Burundi’s Hutu and Tutsi.<sup>110</sup> While “frontiers” in the historical-geographical sense advanced by Turner and discussed above have largely vanished from the contemporary landscape, the “romantic” myths associated with them still continue to provide much of the emotive force fueling separatist nationalisms and their pogroms of ethnic cleansing. For this reason alone the need for including comparative frontier studies within the discipline of history is perhaps more urgent than ever. Furthermore, recent events suggest that yesterday’s “frontiers” may reappear as today’s “borderlands,” and as such retain their status as arenas of socio-political, economic and cultural conflict. But whatever these region’s potential for promoting separatist and ethnic strife, their often ambiguous nature frequently makes them laboratories of inter-cultural cooperation and accommodation as well. For this reason alone, they deserve careful study on the basis of a generally accepted definitional framework, in the traditional historiographic sense, to explain why areas in which accommodation seems the norm suddenly dissolve into a chaos religious or ethnic slaughter.

Conflicts involving deep-rooted nationalist or religious emotions, which often are carefully cultivated by interested politicians, are not unique to former frontiers or

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A brief but useful, popular introduction to the complex Hutu-Tutsi conflict is provided in Mike Edwards, "Central Africa's Cycle of Violence," National Geographic, 191 (June 1997), No. 6, pp. 123-124. Those wishing to investigate more deeply will find further details and a full bibliography in Warren Weinstein, Historical Dictionary of Burundi, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press; 1997).

borderlands. Although it is obvious that Bosnia-Herzegovina fits this category, this is less so in the case of Rwanda. There the bloodletting more resembled that witnessed during the massive rural rebellions of Medieval and Early Modern Europe, or that associated with the Cossack Pugachev in Russia during 1773-1774, all of which are remembered for the brutality with which a furious peasantry took vengeance upon its traditional oppressors.<sup>111</sup> But while some of these same motivating elements may often be present in peripheral frontier zone or borderland conflicts, the “states of mind” and “world-views” involved are usually very different. The mental universe of the peasant is usually largely constrained by the necessities of traditional patterns of agriculture, and geographically bounded by this village and its immediate locality. But by definition, those of a frontiersman or borderer, even if he is transplanted peasant, are necessarily formed by the larger realities of his frontier-borderland, and the actions of his counterparts on the other side of the boundary, be it disputed or otherwise. Although he may continue farming, the peasant settler of such a periphery region is almost invariably translated into the Cossack,

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Useful introductions to peasant resistance and uprisings are Roland Mousnier, Peasant Uprisings in Seventeenth-Century France, Russia, and China, trans. Brian Pearce (New York: Harper and Row; 1970); Yves-Marie Berce, History of Peasant Revolts: The Social Origins of Rebellion in Early Modern France, trans. Amanda Whitmore (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press; 1990); and Fredrich Engels Marxist classic Der deutsche Baurenkrieg (Dusseldorf: Wilhelm Hagemann Verlag; 1947). Other forms of peasant resistance are discussed in Eric J. Hobsbawm’s major study, Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social of Social Movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Manchester, UK: Manchester University; 1959, 1963), and his spin-off Bandits (New York: Dell Publishing; 1969).

Border Guard or akritoi who often despises the “passive” peasants of the interior.

That a frontier has its influence on the “peasant mentality” is also clear in the New World from the failure in New France of a deliberate attempt to recreate the peasant-farmer social model thanks to the blandishments of the fur trade, and from the developing independence and self confidence displayed by Quebec’s “habitants” during the 1740s-1750s. Indeed, by 1700 even the much-harassed Acadian farmers of the Nova Scotian dike-lands were demonstrating a “republican” independence of mind and action that outraged French officials and belies attempts to dismiss them as peasants. But these examples admitted, it is not clear that a similar process is necessarily relevant with regard to the much-debated problems of the place of the America’s pioneers, or the allegedly crucial role of Turner’s frontier, in the formation of the character of the United States. Yet whatever view one takes of the interaction between Atlantic coastal “metropolises” and their western-moving periphery, one observation of Alexis de Tocqueville is unquestionably accurate. “The Americans never use the word ‘peasant,’” he reported; “the word is unused because the idea is unknown; the ignorance of primitive times, rural simplicity, and rustic villages have not been preserved with them, and they have no idea of the virtues or the vices or the rude habits and the naive graces of a newborn civilization.”<sup>112</sup> Yet whatever the supposed virtues and vices of a peasantry, and whatever

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Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ed. J.P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (New York: Harper-Perrenial; 1969), p. 303.

Americans may or may not have been or become, the United States clearly has never been a nation of peasants.<sup>113</sup> In fact, by the late 1500s the feudal system of agriculture and villeinage had virtually disappeared even in England, and neither the Elizabethan mariners, nor the initial Plymouth and Jamestown settlers of the early 1600s, were peasants in the traditional sense.<sup>114</sup> The same is true of their successors in the other Atlantic colonies, including the waves of rigid Protestant Scots-Irish who pushed beyond the Tidewater into the mountains and who, “even in their poverty ... carried themselves with a fierce and stubborn pride that warned others to treat them with respect.”<sup>115</sup>

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In this case, of course, “Americans” refers to the largely Anglo-Americans of the Thirteen Colonies and early United States. Useful introductions to the definition and characteristics of peasants are Eric R. Wolf, Peasants (Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice-Hall; 1966), and the essays in Jack M. Potter, May N. Diaz and George M. Foster, eds., Peasant Society: A Reader (Boston: Little-Brown; 1967).

114

The decline of “peasant characteristics” in the English countryside as early as the late 1300s is evident the portrait of “The Peasant” in Terry Jones and Alan Ereira, Terry Jones’ Medieval People (London: BBC Books; 2004, 2005), pp. 15-35. The transitional nature of English society at this time is discussed in Peter Laslett’s celebrated The World We Have Lost: England Before the Industrial Revolution (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons; 1965), and the “English difference” is evident in the different tones between the European peasant risings discussed above and those in Tudor England. These latter are discussed in Anthony Fletcher, Tudor Revolutions, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London and New York: Longman; 1968, 1973), and John Sturt’s case study, Revolt in the West: The Western Rebellion of 1549 (Exeter, UK: Devon Books; 1987).

115

D.H. Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York and Oxford: Oxford University; 1989, 1991), p. 606. His study of the initial four groups of colonists makes clear that the degree to which they had departed from the basics of the peasant world., and so suggests the degree to which their “frontier” motivations and attitudes brought them to America as settlers.

Consequently, those settlers who launched the Westward Movement in the latter 1700s were never transplanted peasants, and the agriculture they practiced never resembled the European model of peasant-based farming. True, they often moved as families or households, and to some extent the need for extra labor was filled by the use of indentured labourers or, more significantly for the future, by slaves imported from Africa. But in the Anglo-American colonies north of Virginia to Maine, agriculture was practiced either by gentlemen-farmers or their smaller, free-hold neighbours. To the south, despite the spread of plantations worked by slaves into Kentucky and elsewhere, the overwhelming majority of the pioneers-frontiersmen-settlers who pushed into the Appalachia and beyond, were already independent adventurers seeking to carve their own “family farms” out of a perceived Wilderness inhabited by undeserving and uncivilized barbarians. This was the essence of the search for “free land” along and beyond any official American military frontier. And if their “backcountry comity,” as David Fischer calls it, “has sometimes been interpreted by historians as a product of the ‘frontier,’” it did not develop on other frontiers elsewhere. Rather, it “was remarkably similar to patterns of settlement, migration, association, and belonging on the borderlands of north Britain.” To be sure, the pioneers’ experiences in mastering the Wilderness, and in defeating its previous Amerindian inhabitants, undoubtedly affected both their habits and attitudes. Even so, Fischer correctly points out that here as elsewhere, “the pattern of cultural

persistence was very strong.”<sup>116</sup> Indeed, the very successes of these pioneers suggests that for the most part, their ingenuity, independence, resourcefulness, and “state of mind” preexisted their migration westward and created Turner’s settlement frontier, not vice versa. Freed of the need to defend their holdings, and having at last settled on their own homesteads, most frontiersman, or at least their children, then settled down to live as independent free-hold farmers who, whatever their curiosity in some fields and independence of political outlook, nonetheless increasingly resembled the peasant inasmuch as their concerns also focused on the same rhythm imposed by weather and seasons on all those who live by agriculture.

In sum, then, the above discussion and the debates chronicled so far indicate that Turner’s theory has provided a myth of American history, rather than an analytical approach that is useful in explicating the complexity of the backcountry and pioneer reality. They further suggest that any framework of frontier characteristics, strictly defined, is unlikely to win general approval in the near future. But the power of this myth is such that the term “frontier” is now commonly used by historians in a manner that those they write about might well have found peculiar. Indeed, some scholars seemingly find themselves indulging in rather interesting mental gymnastics to justify using the term, if only to place their studies in the mainstream of American historical scholarship.<sup>117</sup> Yet

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<sup>116</sup>D.H. Fischer, Albion’s Seed, p. 765.

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For discussions that end by virtually rejecting Turner, despite reference to his tradition, see, for example, James D. Drake, King Philip’s War: Civil War in New England, 1675-



even if we might do well to discard “frontier theory” in our detailed analyses of that nation’s colonial and republican development, this does not necessarily rob the larger theory of all value. Furthermore, even if the revised definitions of “frontier” do not necessarily reflect reality as participants in events saw it, and even if they may therefore warp our perceptions of their perceptions, Turner’s term is here to stay and focuses attention on the processes of settlement and expansion, both in the United States and elsewhere. More important still, his codification of the concept of the “frontiersman” as a social type has had resonance for scholars studying inhabitants far removed from Trans-Appalachia or the American West, including the subjects of the remainder of this study.

Meanwhile, many now concur in accepting that there are “frontiers” other than simple geographically based state boundaries or borderlines; that these may differ as well from Turner’s line or further fringe of settlement; but that such frontiers and their associated borderlands also seem to share a number of common, identifiable characteristics. Almost all, for example, agree that frontiers usually comprise broad territorial zones on a state’s periphery, even if not necessarily in the form of the “ecological” frontier zones suggested by Owen Lattimore. As well, many accept that these

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1676 (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts; 1999), pp. 172-174, and David Jaffee, People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History and Memory, 1630-1860 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University; 1999), pp. 3, 6, 128, 138. A good example of the seemingly beneficial results of ignoring Turner’s concept of the “frontier,” even if use of the term itself is discussed, is Jill Lepore, The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity (New York: Random House-Vintage; 1999), pp. xii-xiv, 194.

zones are frequently exploited economically by a metropolitan centre, and that life on that periphery makes demands on the “frontiersmen” that differ from those required of citizens in the central home metropolis. True, Turner’s concept of an American national character formed in the crucible of the frontier experience is now rejected as simplistic as best. Nonetheless, his concept of the “frontiersmen” as a more general social type has had resonance for many scholars studying inhabitants far removed in place and time from the backcountry of Trans-Appalachia or the American West. Whatever they are called – woodsmen , borderers, frontiersmen, or Cossacks – these men differ from the mass of the world’s agricultural peasantry in terms of their more precarious conditions of life, their unique skills and characteristics, and the fact that they are animated by a distinctive “frontier spirit” or “state of mind.” Similarly, many also agree that through the interaction between a centre and its “frontier” periphery, the latter transform’s the former’s cultural self-perceptions even as the centre strives to replicate its society within the often hostile environment of a frontier zone. When frontiers collide, most now accept that these separate frontier zones often merge to form a larger borderland region, one which may survive even after it is transected by a formal state boundary or borderline. And both before and after such a demarcation, the interaction between the two frontier zones’ individual communities of borderer-frontiersmen means that they share many of unique cross-border cultural characteristics that differentiate them from their metropolitan centres.

### **Maritime Frontiers and Borderlands?**

However much the characteristics of frontiers and borderlands vary from theory to theory, one element has remained constant throughout the above discussions. This is the fact that an elephant – or perhaps we should say a walrus or sea lion – has been sitting quietly on the sidelines, in the corner. Despite the passions roused by Turner’s thesis among both his supporters and detractors, to date their discussions have remained largely land-bound, and therefore been focused on less than three-tenths of the earth’s surface, as well as on roughly only one percent of our planet’s living space.<sup>118</sup> And clearly, if we accept with Turner that the act of settlement is accepted as a fundamental and necessary aspect of any frontier, it is clearly absurd to count Ocean as one of mankind’s most challenging frontiers, one that now as in the past still “both shapes our character and tests our mettle.”<sup>119</sup> This means that little thought has been given to identifying similar characteristics in, let alone to the utility of applying at least parts of the various theories of “frontiers” and “borderlands” to the study of maritime history. Rather, as demonstrated below, historians have only recently begun speaking seriously of what Michael Pearson calls the “human frontiers of the ocean.” But despite using this expression, and his own a wide-ranging treatment of such “frontiers,” even Pearson follows Fernand Braudel by

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On the extent of the oceans see the comments in James C. Bradford and Gene A. Smith, “Foreword” to Daniel Finamore, ed., Maritime History as World History (Salem, MA, and Gainesville, FL: Peabody Essex Museum-University Press of Florida; 2004), p. ix.

119

Salman Rushdie, Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction, 1992-2002 (Toronto, Ont.: Alfred A. Knopf Canada; 2002), p. 381.

treating them in the traditional European manner as boundaries. He therefore insists that the “general problem” now facing maritime historians “is to be more precise about the frontiers of the sea,”<sup>120</sup> not the development of some more general theory that regards such frontiers as more than mere boundaries, and which thus would parallel the more complex and suggestive concepts advanced by Turner and the other authors discussed above.

In part this lack of interest in a “maritime frontier theory” also reflects the general neglect of maritime history (as opposed to naval history) that long afflicted the academic historical profession. “In most general histories,” wrote one British scholar in 1981, “the maritime aspect of affairs is by far the most neglected side of the matter.”<sup>121</sup> True, by 1800 tales of exploits at sea and more general naval histories were proliferating in Great Britain, the most prominent maritime power of the day. But like military history, these

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Michael Pearson, The Indian Ocean (London and New York: Routledge; 2003), pp. 27-28. His quotes passages from Fernand Braudel’s demonstrating use of the term “frontier” in his influential The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, 2 vols., trans. Sian Reynolds (London and New York: Collins/ Harper and Row; 1972), I, pp. 168-170. Yet this is the beginning of a chapter entitled “Boundaries: The Greater Mediterranean,” in which the two terms are used interchangeably and again, while Braudel’s discussion is equally wide-ranging, his use of “frontier” remains restricted to a synonym for “boundary.”

121

G.J. Marcus, The Conquest of the North Atlantic (New York: Oxford University; 1981), p. xii. Exceptions to this statement not dealt with by Marcus might also include E.G. Bowen, Saints, Seaways and Settlements in the Celtic Lands (Cardiff: University of Wales; 1969) and Archibald R. Lewis, The Northern Seas: Shipping and Commerce in Northern Europe, A.D. 300-1100 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University; 1958), among a handful of others.

works belong largely to the “drums and cannon” school.<sup>122</sup> Nonetheless, matters were changing by the 1880s thanks to debates over various emerging theories of naval warfare and “navalist” policies of expanded shipbuilding. In Britain a more scholarly approach was promoted by the theoretical writings of brothers Vice Admiral Philip Colomb (1831-1899) and Captain Sir John Colomb (1838-1899), Sir Julian Corbett (1854-1922), and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond (1871-1946). These writers’ works depended largely on historical analysis, which in turn brought a more academic approach to naval history as such. This changing atmosphere is evident in the growth of scholarly publications such as the series Publications of the Naval Records Society, volumes of which have appeared continuously since 1894; of William Laird Clowes’ (1856-1905) seven-volume history of the Royal Navy; and of Sir Halford J. Mackinder’s (1861-1947) ocean-focused geographical studies.<sup>123</sup>

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Typical of early British naval histories is Captain Edward Pelham Brenton’s, The Naval History of Great Britain from the Year MDCCLXXXIII to MDCCCXXII, 5 vols. (London: C. Rice; 1823-1825); Lieutenant Charles R. Low, The Great Battles of the British Navy (London: George Routledge and Sons; c. 1886); and much later, Vice-Admiral Gordon Campbell’s tales of Sailormen All (London: Hodder and Stoughton; 1933).

<sup>123</sup>

On the the Columbs, Corbett and Richmond see Donald M. Schurman, The Education of a Navy: The Development of British Naval Strategic Thought, 1867-1914 (London: Cassell; 1965). Also see W.L. Clowes’ The Royal Navy: A History from the Earliest Times to 1900, 7 vols. (London: Sampson, Low; 1897-1903), and H.J. Mackinder’s classic Britain and the British Seas (New York: D. Appleton and Co.; 1902). In Canada, meanwhile, maritime and naval literature long continued to be confined largely to such traditional works as C.H.J. Snider’s The Glorious “Shannon’s” Old Blue Duster and Other Faded Flags of Fadeless Fame (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart; 1923) and

The situation was paralleled, although on a lesser scale, on the continent. There, too, debates over changing naval technology, tactics and doctrine, as well as “navalist” policies of expanded shipbuilding in France, Germany, Italy and Russia, promoted a similar interest in naval history.<sup>124</sup> By the 1890s the same was true in the United States as well. There, three years before Turner announced his frontier theory, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan’s (1840-1914) The Influence of Seapower upon History provided a theoretical basis for American “navalists” and exponents of a “blue-water fleet.” Like his

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his Under the Red Jack: Privateers of the Maritime Provinces of Canada in the War of 1812 (Toronto, Ont.: Musson Book Company; c. 1928); Archibald MacMechan’s There Go the Ships (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart; 1928), and his Tales of the Sea, selected and intro. Thomas H. Raddall (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart; 1947); and the works of Frederick William Wallace discussed in chapter 5 below..

124

On the doctrinal and other developments of European navies in this period see Lawrence Sondhaus, Navies of Europe, 1815-2002 (London: Pearson Education; 2002), chaps. 3-6. Individual aspects of the naval thought of individual nations are dealt with in the essays collected in Herve Coutau-Begarie, L’Évolution de la pensée navale, 3 vols. (Paris: Centre d’analyse politique comparée, Fondation pour les études de défense nationale; 1990, 1992, 1993). As for naval historical works, in France these included Leon Guerin, Histoire maritime de France, rev. and exp. ed., 6 vols. (Paris: Dufour et Mulat; 1851); Georges Lacour-Gayet, Le Marine militaire de la France sous le règne de Louis XV (Paris: Honore Champion; 1902); G. Dagnaud, L’Administration centrale de la marine sous l’ancien régime (Paris: Révue Maritime; 1912); and in this tradition, Jacques Mordal’s Twenty-Five Centuries of Sea Warfare, trans. Len Orzen (London: Abbey Library; 1959). Although Germany only entered on the naval scene in the 1890s, Russian sailors celebrated their somewhat longer maritime heritage in Senior Lieutenant E.N. Kvashnin-Samarin, Morskaia ideia v russkoi zemle: Istoriia do petrovskoi Rusi s voenno-morskoi tochki zreniia [The Naval Idea in Russia: History to Peter I’s Russia from a Naval Viewpoint] (St. Petersburg: Izd. Morskogo General’nago Shtaba; 1912), and P.I. Belavenets, Znachenie flota v istorii Rossii [The Significance of the Fleet in Russian History], 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Petrograd: Knigoizd. “Yakor”; 1914), both of which are clearly navalist in spirit.

British counterparts, he based his doctrinal conclusions on a dense body of historical research and analysis. Consequently, naval history gained in status and thereafter was a subject of serious study by America's professional naval officers, who occasionally were professional historians as well.<sup>125</sup> Even so, within university walls the study of both naval and general maritime history long languished, a fact that seemingly supports G.J. Marcus' charge "that the academic authority shies away from the difficulties and the dangers of a whole range of problems that demand a highly specialized knowledge to which as a rule he does not attain," such as the history of seafaring and navigation.<sup>126</sup>

There is, of course, much more to the matter than a long-standing academic neglect of

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Mahan's celebrated The Influence of Seapower upon History, 1660-1783, intro. Louis M. Hacker (New York: Hill and Wang; 1957), was followed a range of books and articles, including his Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812, 2 vols. (1905, reprinted New York: Haskell House; 1969). Later naval histories in his tradition include William Oliver Stevens and Allan Westcott, A History of Sea Power (New York: Doubleday, Doran; 1931); Rear Admiral S.S. Robison and Mary L. Robinson, A History of Naval Tactics from 1530 to 1930: The Evolution of Tactical Maxims (Annapolis, MD: US Naval Institute; 1942); and E.B. Potter with J.R. Fredland, eds., The United States and World Sea Power (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall; 1955). Works on more general maritime history include Winthrop L. Marvin's The American Merchant Marine: Its History and Romance from 1620 to 1902 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; 1902), and Samuel Eliot Morison's The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin; 1924, 1941). Morison, incidentally, is rare in being a practical sailor, a professional historian and a sailor-civilian academic, who subsequently penned numerous studies on aspects of the European voyages of discovery. On the development of American naval scholarship see John B. Hattendorf, B. Mitchell Simpson, III, and John R. Wadleigh, Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the U.S. Naval War College (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press; 1984).

<sup>126</sup>

G.J. Marcus, The Conquest of the North Atlantic, p. xii.

the maritime sphere. After all, during the years 1900-1909 Frederick Jackson Turner himself was a visiting lecturer in American history at the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, but his gaze remained firmly fixed inland, beyond the Appalachians. A native of Wisconsin, born and bred, he can perhaps be forgiven for missing the lure the seas had once exerted on his fellow citizens along the eastern seaboard.<sup>127</sup> Whatever the reason, he and the overwhelming majority of his fellows continued to focus on the epic of the conquest and populating of North America by settlers from across the Atlantic. Within this context, they regarded the eastern coast as a jumping-off point for the movement westwards, and shipping merely as a means of providing more fodder for that movement, or for navigating the Mississippi and other river systems. As a result, the occasional exception aside,<sup>128</sup> American scholars long remained clearly uninterested in including oceans within their historical theories.

In many ways, of course, this was only to be expected. Like Turner, most tied their

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For a brief biography of Turner see Wilbur R. Jacobs' entry in Howard R. Lamar, ed., The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West (New York: Harper and Row; 1977), pp. 1199-2000. Turner's inclusion among Naval War College lecturers is recorded in J.B. Hattendorh, et al., Sailors and Scholars, p. 55.

<sup>128</sup>

Apart from Samuel Morison, the most notable exceptions probably are the economist, later historian Robert Greenhalgh Albion, who published his influential Forests and Sea Power: The Timber Problem of the Royal Navy, 1652-1852 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 1926), and John Bartlett Brebner, who pioneered the study of the North Atlantic as a region in his North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain (New Haven, CT, and Toronto, Ont.: Yale University-Ryerson; 1945).



frontiers, real and conceptual, to the actual process of pioneer settlement which, as noted, is manifestly improbable, if not utterly impossible, on the expanses of the world's oceans. This issue is discussed at length in the next chapter, but here I will point out that in seeking to reverse this trend, I am not using the term "frontier" in some metaphorical sense. In "American useage," as Igor Kopytoff observes, "the term 'frontier' slides easily into metaphor. No sooner had America accepted 'the End of the Frontier' then it was told that a 'New Frontier' had begun, not least by probing the 'Last Frontier of Space.'" Since Turner we have had "night" described as a frontier opened to colonization by electric lighting, the "crabgrass frontier" of suburbia, and any number frontiers or borderlands of science, history, and so on.<sup>129</sup> Kopytoff insists that his African frontiers are more "on the side of reality" than of metaphor,<sup>130</sup> and although I use the term somewhat more broadly, the same is true with regard to my "maritime-Oceanic frontier."

In my view, the oceanic realm deserves this designation because it is a geographically defined area of the globe, whose bounds are in many places marked by "bordering states," and into which dynamic societies often seek to expand and frequently, wage

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Examples of such metaphorical usages are Murray Melbin, Night as Frontier: Colonizing the World after Dark (New York: Free Press; 1987); K.T. Jackson, The Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbization of the United States (New York: Oxford University; 1985); W. Arens, On the Frontier of Change (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan; 1979); and Stanley Cobb, Borderlands of Psychiatry (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 1943).

130

I. Kopytoff, Introduction to "The Political Dynamics of the Urban Frontier," African Frontier, p. 255.

major wars for “command of the sea” within its watery “borderlands.” Such expansion also can be described as a “process,” one that begins with the integration of offshore islands, both great and small, into the immediate coastal zone. The process then involves to the mastery of the techniques required to “sail the ocean blue;” to end with the ocean being manageable, but not conquered, and with the founding of a new coastal zone on far distant shores. Within this context all these associated coastal regions become secondary “border regions;” that is, as zones caught between the two worlds of land and water, or rather, one in which these two worlds meet and produce distinct ways of living and cultures. Meanwhile, for the “maritime frontiersmen” who carry through this process, and who have adapted themselves to its often unique and deadly circumstances, the oceanic realm or “frontier” has from the first offered opportunities for economic and social advancement. And like “frontier processes” elsewhere, that in the maritime realm gives rise to its own unique myths, traditions and patterns of accepted behaviour.

All these elements will be discussed in greater detail below. But while I draw on insights gained from Turner, Lattimore, Lewis, and the other students of frontiers already outlined, it is obvious that while each nation’s seafarers reflect its values, the impact of the oceanic world’s environment on man, and the ecological constraints this imposes, create a number of unique features which modify the metropolitan cultures of seafarers. Furthermore, these features and their impact are more permanent and less variable in terms of both place and time than are those found on the range of various land-based frontiers studied by the historians considered to date. As a result, the mariner-

frontiersmen of all cultures, eras and nations have much more in common with each other than do their land-bound counterparts who lived and operated in environments as varied as the seventeenth-century Cossack steppe, eighteenth-century African veld and nineteenth-century American plains.

Some may suggest that my definitions are too broad or, to recall Alastair Hennessy's word, "elastic." Although he accepts that precise definitions may sometimes be useful, he also warns that they "can cramp and distort as well as pinpoint and illuminate."<sup>131</sup> So while admitting that each frontier is historically and culturally unique, we may still find commonalities in style and substance observed in people responding in like manner to the similar problems imposed by frontier conditions on both sides of my coastal "border zone." If the "states of mind" and systems of "values" of those who traverse oceans, or who support those who do so, resemble or parallel those of explorers and pioneers on a range of the varied land-based "frontiers," than it seems worth the effort to examine the possibility that seaborne frontiers exist from this point of view as well. Indeed, we have seen that even Turner saw a similarity in attitudes and motives between the expansionist tendencies of the Westward Movement, and those of the ancient maritime Greeks who colonized the Mediterranean after the eighth century BC. So if an expanding society or culture creates a environment, maritime or otherwise, that feels like a frontier (or borderland), and which has impacts on the people and institutions involved that are

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<sup>131</sup>

A. Hennessy, The Frontier in Latin American History, p. 3.

similar to those exerted by land-based frontiers (or borderlands), then whatever their differences and peculiarities, my “maritime-oceanic frontiers” may indeed be frontiers in their own right.

**PART II**  
**THE OCEAN FRONTIER**

23. They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;

24. These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.

25. For he commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

26. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble.

27. They reel too and fro, and stagger like a drunken man and are at their wit's end.

28. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

29. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

30. Then are they glad because they are quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

31. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

-- Psalm, 107: 23-31, The Holy Bible: Authorized or King James Version (Racine, WI: Whitman Publishing; n.d.), p. 430.

**CHAPTER IV:  
THE ONE BIG OCEAN: A WATER WORLD**

The erth, quhilk first wes so fair formit,  
 Wes, be that furious flude, deformit.  
 Quhare umquhyle [formerly] wer the plesand planis,  
 Wer holkit [hollow] Glennis and hie montais  
 Frome clattryng cragis, gret and gray,  
 The erth was weschin [washed] quyte away.  
 But Noye had gretast displesouris,  
 Behauldand the dede Creatouris,  
 Quhilk wes ane sycht rycht Lamentabyll.  
 Men, Wemen, Beistis Innumerabyll,  
 Seyng thame ly upone the landis,  
 And sum wer fleityng on the strandis.  
 Quhalis [whales] and Monstouris of the seis  
 Stickit on stobbis [stumps], amang the treis,  
 And, quhen the Flude was decessand,  
 They wer left welteryng [rolling] on the land.  
 Affore the Flude duryng that space,  
 The sey [sea] wes all in to ane place.  
 Rycht so the erth, as bene desydit,  
 In syndrie partis wes nocht devydit,  
 As bene Europe and Asia  
 Devydit ar frome Africa.  
 Ye se, now, divers Famous Ilis  
 Stand frome the mane land mony mylis:  
 All thir gret Ilis, I understand,  
 War, than, equall with the ferme land.  
 Thare wes none sey Mediterrane,  
 But onely the gret Occiane,  
 Quhilk did nocht spred sic bulryng [roaring with the waves] strandis  
 As it dois, now, ouirthort [across] the landis,  
 Than, be the ragyng of the flude,  
 The erth of vertew [fertility, fruitfulness] wes denude.  
 The quhilk afore wes to be prysit,  
 Quhose bewtie than wes dissagysit [disquised].

---- Extract [with notes] from Sir David Lindsay (c.1490-c.1555), "After the Flood," from The Monarchie, in John MacQueen and Tom Scott, eds., The Oxford Book of Scottish Verse (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1966), pp. 190-193.

Our long neglect of studying the waters surrounding us is nothing short of remarkable. After all, by ignoring the seas and great Ocean we are quite simply neglecting most of our globe's surface, as well as a major, if not the dominating influence upon our lives. "Earth is a water world," remarked the oceanographer Robert Cowan in 1960,<sup>1</sup> to which the American Association for the Advancement of Science adds: "Water is the most fundamental of finite resources."<sup>2</sup> Cowan also points out that 70.8 percent of our globe's surface "lies in or under its seas." Furthermore, this 139,400,000 square miles of oceans cover "a volume of water so great that if the earth had an absolutely level crust, the sea would form an envelope over 8,800 feet deep."<sup>3</sup> Or put differently, the total volume of our globe's water is eleven times greater than that of dry land.<sup>4</sup> This quantity of liquid water results from a fortunate mix of cosmic factors, the most significant of which is our planet's position within the solar system. As third from the sun, planet Earth is close enough to be warmed sufficiently so that our water and components in our atmosphere do not freeze permanently, but far enough distant that our oceans, seas, lakes, and so on are

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Robert C. Cowen, Frontiers of the Sea (London and NY: Victor Gollancz/ Bantam Pathfinder; 1960, 1963), p. 7.

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Quoted in Pauline Couture, Ice: Beauty, Danger, History (Toronto, Ont.: McArthur and Company; 2004), p. 43.

3

R.C. Cowen, Frontiers of the Sea, p. 11.

4

William H. Koelbel, The Seas and the Oceans, quoted in Captain John Coote, The Faber Book of the Sea: An Anthology (London: Faber and Faber; 1989), p. 4.

not instantly vaporized. Consequently, when viewed from space, our earth appears as “the blue planet.”<sup>5</sup>

In describing Atlantic Canada one contemporary Nova Scotian poet talks of “the sea among the rocks.”<sup>6</sup> From the perspective just outlined above, we might better speak of not only the Atlantic Provinces, but of all the terrestrial areas of our globe as the rocks within the seas. Nonetheless, even the most contemporary critiques of “modernist” geographical concepts fix their sights on issues such as “Eurocentrism” and our “Western” blinders with regard to other lands, but have little or nothing to say about the watery expanses that both separate and unite the continents.<sup>7</sup> As the once popular writer Hendrik Van Loon remarked, it is all too easy to forget that we all live on islands, even if we chose to place the largest in “a class of their own and have called them ‘continents.’”<sup>8</sup> Filipe Fernandez-Armesto agrees and when explaining his motives for studying maritime history, he points out that “the sea is not marginal to the land. On our planet, the land is

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Stephen Hutchinson and Lawrence E. Hawkins, Oceans: A Visual Guide (Buffalo, NY, and Richmond Hill, Ont.: Firefly Books; 2005), p. 18.

6

Harry Thurston, The Sea Among the Rocks: Travels in Atlantic Canada (Lawrencetown Beach, NS: Pottersfield Press; 2002).

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See, for example, Martin W. Lewis and Kare E. Wigen, The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California; 1997).

8

Hendrik Van Loon, Van Loon's Geography (1932), as quoted in F. Fernandez-Armesto, Civilizations (Toronto, Ont.: Key Porter Books; 2000), p. 325.



marginal to the sea” or the Ocean.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, as he insists elsewhere,

proximity to the sea is such a powerful feature of any environment which includes it that it dwarfs all others. Whatever the nature of the soil or temperature, the relief or the biota, if the sea is at hand it has a shaping force. Nearness to the shore molds one’s outlook and affects the way one thinks. The sea is awesome because it is intractable, untrappable; it changes everything it touches without being easily changed in turn. It makes coral of bones and pearls of eyes. It reshapes shorelines, erodes coasts, gulps swards and cities, hews continents. At us land creatures it flings weather systems which, after all our millennia of civilization, symbolize the continuing feebleness of our power over the environment. The sea has no appointed limits, except in the pious cravings of the prayerful.

All in all, he concludes, the sea (or perhaps better, Ocean) “is a part of chaos that survived creation. It makes us feel small.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Ocean as Womb and Hinterland**

As impressive as is its vast expanse, the fact that the seas contain 97.5 percent of the earth's water is equally so.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the seas long have been perceived as “an inexhaustible mine of wealth – a harvest, ripe for gathering at every time of the year,

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Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, “Maritime History and World History,” in Daniel Finamore, ed., Maritime History as World History (Salem, MA, and Gainesville, FL: Peabody Essex Museum/ University of Florida; 2004), p. 8.

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F. Fernandez-Armesto, Civilizations, p. 327.

11

S. Hutchinson and L.E. Hawkins, Oceans: A Visual Guide, p. 18. They add that the remaining 2.5 percent is fresh water of which, in 2005, 79 percent was locked up in ice caps and glaciers and 20 percent was ground water, leaving only one percent available as “accessible surface freshwater.” This last, in turn, was subdivided into water in the soil (38 %), water in lakes (52 %), water vapor in the atmosphere (8 %), water in rivers (1 %), and water in living organism (1 %); Ibid., p. 19.

without the expense of seed and manure, without the payment of rent or taxes,” as a publicist put it in 1813. Having lauded the seas as the home of more “wholesome, palatable, and nutritious [sic!] food than ... the richest land,” he then concluded that “the mine we have to work upon is in reality inexhaustible....”<sup>12</sup> If this has proven to overstate the case, the fact remains that mineral and other resources aside, the seas do contain 97 percent of our world’s living space which support a wide range of aquatic plants and creatures. In addition, the seafloor’s continuing expansion “creates towering mountains, deep undersea trenches, and active hydrothermal vents that abound with strange marine organisms,” as well as earthquakes and tsunamis. Perhaps more important from our point of view, these vast oceanic waters teem “with life millions of years in the making, from the tiniest of microscopic bacteria to the largest of living creatures, the blue whale.” A multitude of small floating plants simultaneously helps to enrich our atmosphere with oxygen while removing carbon dioxide from it. And finally, interactions of the air with the seas “dictate climate and weather, and ocean currents regulate the Earth's global thermometer,” all of which explains why scientists insist that “without the ocean there would be no Earth or life as we know it, for ours is a life-giving, water-blessed planet.”<sup>13</sup>

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This now dated and over-optimistic assessment was made by the British political commentator Henry Schultes, and is quoted in Callum Roberts, The Unnatural History of the Sea (Washington, DC: Island Press-Shearwater Books; 2007), p. 163.

<sup>13</sup>

Ellen J. Prager with Sylvia A. Earle, The Oceans (New York: McGraw-Hill; 2000), p.

Ocean, then, has done much to shape and maintain life since the first creatures emerged within the primordial seas, and it has helped sustain mankind throughout his history. Consequently, it is hardly surprising that these primal waters have served in many cultures as the world's maternal source in numerous creation myths.<sup>14</sup> More recently, oceanographers like Cowan insist that in the modern world, these "incredibly vast" oceanic stretches form humanity's "greatest hinterland..., a virgin territory as challenging and more promising of economic reward than the forbidding regions of outer space." Writing in 1960, at a time of growing pressures for food and other resources, he believed we at last had the technical and scientific means equal to the task of finally undertaking the systematic exploitation of the Ocean. This last he termed a "grab bag stuffed with riches out of which man has been taking only those few packages he can lay

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ix. They apparently borrowed the term "global thermostat" from the title of chapter 12 (pp. 207-227) of Rachel Carson's famous The Sea Around Us [1951], reprint, intro. Robert D. Ballard; afterword Brian J. Skinner (Oxford: Oxford University; 2003). Carson (p. 229) also adds that Ocean "is earth's greatest storehouse of minerals" and like Prager and Earle (187-265), she devotes considerable space (pp. 53-95) to the bewildering diversity of aquatic life. For a fuller description of the identified creatures to date, also see Andrew Campbell and John Dawes, eds., The New Encyclopedia of Aquatic Life: Aquatic Invertebrates, Fishes, and Aquatic Mammals (New York: Facts On File; 2004), The mix of mythological with real creatures is explored in Richard Ellis, Monsters of the Sea (Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot-Lyons Press; 1994), and Bernard Heuvelmans, The Kraken and the Colossal Octopus: In the Wake of Sea-Monsters (London: Kegan Paul; 2006), while the largest sea mammals are similarly dealt with in Leonard Harrison Matthews, ed., The Whale, foreword Philip F. Purrington (New York: Simon and Schuster; 1968).

<sup>14</sup>

David Lemming, The Oxford Companion to World Mythology (Oxford and New York: Oxford University; 2005), p. 326.

hands on easily, often, by blindly groping,” in his search for food and minerals, and which therefore remains “relatively untapped.”<sup>15</sup> Yet thereafter, progress was so rapid that only two decades later (1981), one popular author could announce that the “excitements of this last frontier of discovery are equal to those of a voyage in space, and far more relevant to our survival.” But he added the somber warning as well: that now our “very success is putting the oceans in jeopardy.”<sup>16</sup> For unlike the farmer, until recently “man” – be he a fisher, sealer, whaler, or so on -- has always been “taking away life from the sea – he neither sows nor fertilises the waters; only reaps.”<sup>17</sup>

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R.C. Cowan, Frontiers of the Sea, pp. 11, 245. At this time a colleague already was warning that: “Dry land, then, is a sort of accident on the surface of our earth, a consequence of the uneasy balance between the forces resulting in the irregular uplift and constant leveling tendencies of the process of erosion.” He then warned that we still lived in an Ice Age, and that if the great glaciers of Antarctica and Greenland, along with other, smaller glaciers “melted – and it seems likely that they are now slowly melting – the added water in the oceans would raise sea level something like sixty feet. Although trivial in terms of the ocean’s volume, it would drastically change our coastlines: ”There would be very little left of Florida; and one wonders at what point Manhattan Island would be abandoned to the rising seas...;” Marston Bates, The Forest and the Sea: A Look at the Economy of Nature and the Ecology of Man, new intro. Loren Eiseley (New York: Time Incorporated; 1960, 1964), p. 44. For other assessments of this danger see footnote 17 above.

16

Michael Gill, Introduction to Clare Francis and Warren Tute, The Commanding Sea [Six Voyages of Discovery] (London: British Broadcasting Corporation with Pelham Books; 1981), p. vii. An updated report on one problem and the measures adopted to deal with it is Benjamin H. Grumbles, “EPA’s Marine Debris Program: Taking Action Against Trash,” Sea Technology, 49 (January 2008), No. 1, pp. 23-24.

17

W.J. Dakin, Australia’s Seashores, new ed., ed. Isobel Bennett (Sydney, NSW: Angus and Robertson; 1987), p. 6.

Apart from ignoring this emerging oceanic and oceanographic “hinterland” or “frontier,” the traditional approach of many historians and social scientists also tends to downplay the fact that we humans, as the ancient Greek geographer Strabo (64/63 BC-AD c. 23) observed wisely, may well be “amphibious, and belong no more to the land than to the sea.”<sup>18</sup> If he feels no need to explain, some modern writers make a similar point at greater length. Lena Lencek, for example, remarks that it was on the beaches or “the borders of continents and islands that the first living creatures crawled out from the sea to begin their inexorable march toward conquest of terra firma.”<sup>19</sup> Having dubbed “the water’s edge” as the “first frontier,” and amphibian “beach-Crawlers” as the first boundary-crossers, Salman Rushdie recently suggested that our “own births mirror the crossing of the frontier between the elements.” For, he continues, when we “emerge from amniotic fluid, from the liquid universe of the womb, we, too, discover that we can breathe; we, too, leave the waterworld to become denizens of earth and air.”<sup>20</sup> But whatever our subconscious memories and imaginative responses to some distant aquatic origins, the fact remains, as Rachel Carson pointed out in 1953, that we “could not

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Strabo, *Geography*, 8 vols., trans. Horace Leonard Jones, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University-Loeb Classical Library; 1917, 2005), i, Bk. 1, p. 29.

<sup>19</sup>

Lena Lencek and Gideon Bosker, *The Beach: The History of Paradise on Earth* (New York: Penguin-Viking; 1998), p. xx.

<sup>20</sup>

Salman Rushdie, *Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction, 1992-2002* (Toronto, Ont.: Alfred A. Knopf Canada; 2002), pp. 349-350.

physically re-enter the ocean as the seals and whales had done.” Therefore, of necessity, man “has returned to his mother sea only on her own terms.” With his technology and science, however, man can now better exploit and even rape the waters, and in time may even “change” them through his pollution and over-fishing. But even if he destroys the very resources on which he depends, he still lacks what Carson (echoing Byron) termed the ability to “control” the Ocean in the same manner that “in his brief tenancy on earth, he has subdued and plundered the continents” to create his “artificial world of his cities and towns....”<sup>21</sup>

The symbolic significance of transitions from land to sea will be examined below, but here it is worth noting the purely natural and physical features of the coastal divide between the two realms. The Ocean, or seas, fill in basins or depressions in the earth’s surface that are created by the edges of the continental landmasses. These last themselves are constantly undergoing gradual change due to the soil deposited by great rivers, or erosion from strong coastal currents and powerful waves.<sup>22</sup> The inner margins of such

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R. Carson, The Sea Around Us (2003), pp. 17-19. She adds that man “often forgets the true nature of his planet and the long vistas of its history, in which the existence of the race of men has occupied a mere moment of time.” Yet given the ecological problems of disappearing fish stocks and rising levels of pollution, she may have spoken too soon! These issues are briefly in the chapter “The Inexhaustible Sea” in C. Roberts, The Unnatural History of the Sea, pp. 163-170.

22

Typical treatments of the changing coastline are Tom Koppel, Ebb and Flow: Tides and Life on Our Once and Future Planet (Toronto, Ont.: Dundurn Group; 2007), pp. 91-114; Peter Farb’s Face of North America: The Natural History of a Continent (New York: Harper and Row; 1963), Part II: “The Watery Rim,” pp. 19-71; and of Great Britain,

basins are extensions of these adjacent landmasses and form what we call the “continental shelves.” These are covered by comparatively shallow seas and, since this permits sunlight to penetrate to the seabed, are the sites of most aquatic life as well as of the majority of mankind’s oceanic activities.<sup>23</sup> Defined by a 100-fathom line, the shelf off of North America’s eastern coast is particularly broad and extends an average of fifty miles (80km) from the shoreline. If we move horizontally from shore to the edge of the continental shelf, we pass from the neritic zone to the oceanic zone, which begins at a depth of 660 feet (200m), or where the continental shelf ends in a steep slide down the continental slope. This descent into the abyss -- which from the American eastern shelf to the 1,000-fathom line is another fifty miles(80km) -- takes us to depths of 19,680 feet

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Jack Hardesty, The British Seas: An Introduction to the Oceanography and Resources of the North-West European Continental Shelf (London and New York: Routledge; 1990), pp. 11-23; along with the nicely illustrated Richard Offen, Margaret Willes and James Parry, The Living Coast (London: The National Trust; 2003). On tides, waves and the wave regime see W.H. Koelbel, The Seas and the Oceans, p. 6; J. Hardesty, The British Seas, pp. 47-76; E.J. Prager with S.A. Earle, The Oceans, pp. 78-113; and R. Carson, The Sea Around Us, pp. 143-176. Carson (p. 154) notes the interesting fact that the pioneer in wave measurement was Thomas Stevenson, son of the famous lighthouse builder and father of the celebrated author Robert Louis Stevenson. By using his invention, the dynamometer, he found that during winter gales the waves along the Scottish coast had a force of up to 6000 pounds per square inch!

<sup>23</sup>

Apart from maritime coastal activities, continental shelves were often once the sites of land-based coastal settlements, later submerged by rising sea levels, and so doubly valuable to archaeologists. This issue is addressed on a global scale (with a useful map) by Geoff Bailey, “The Wider Significance of Submerged Archaeological Sites and Their Relevance to World Prehistory,” in N.C. Flemming, ed., Submarine Prehistoric Archaeology of the North Sea: Research Priorities and Collaboration with Industry (York, UK: Council of British Archaeology Research Report 141; 2004), pp. 3-10.

(6,000m) or more. Here we find Ocean's "hadal" floor which, perhaps surprisingly given the scientific advances of the past century, remains largely unexplored. As for the neritic zone itself, this begins at the end of the "supralittoral," or the dry land above the high tide mark, and is divided into the "littoral," or the area between the high and low tide lines, and the "sublittoral," which comprises both the inner and outer zones of the continental shelf.<sup>24</sup>

### **Oceans and Weather**

Felipe Fernandez-Armesto observed that "the sea that hews lands also shapes cultures."<sup>25</sup> In part this last arises from Ocean's above-mentioned role as a global thermometer, which is of special significance. Since its waters make up such a large part of the biosphere, its basic components act as the engines of weather systems that have their impact within the distant continental depths of the Americas, Africa and Eurasia, and not just along their more immediate coastal regions. For example, the "North Atlantic Oscillation" (NAO) – the ten-year cycles of warming and cooling currents which affect wind strengths – determines the severity of central Russian winters. Here the switch is based on the positions of two major high and low pressure areas. In

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<sup>24</sup>

S. Hutchinson and L.E. Hawkins, Oceans, p. 24; W.H. Koelbel, The Seas and the Oceans, p. 4. For more on the formation and nature of the ocean floor, see Douglas Palmer, Prehistoric Past Revealed: A Four Billion Years' History of Life on Earth (Berkeley, CA: University of California; 2003), pp. 62-63.

<sup>25</sup>

F. Fernandez-Armesto, "Maritime History and World History," p. 9.



“normal” times, the high sits over the Azores and the low over Iceland. Then the “westerlies” blow toward Europe in between the two pressure systems while other winds blow in the opposite direction north of Iceland and south of the Azores. Roughly at decade-length intervals, the position and strengths of these pressure systems oscillates so a low pressure zone sits over the Azores, the Icelandic low moves southwest to Newfoundland, and a new high forms over Greenland. Consequently, the water-warmed and moisture-laden westerlies slacken while dry, colder polar air blows into northern Europe to bring cooler, dryer summers and colder winters. Or as Brian Fagan explains, when the pressure over Greenland is higher than that over Europe (“Greenland Above”), the North Atlantic is colder, Europe is warmer, and the “westerlies” stronger; but in the opposite case – “Greenland Below” – the opposite conditions prevail. Then North America enjoys milder summers, but is subjected to more frequent “nor’easter” storms.<sup>26</sup>

Again, in the Pacific we identify the “Southern Oscillation.” Its most notable event occurs every three to eight (some say 2 to 7) years with the sudden onset of an “El Nino

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Brian M. Fagan, The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History (New York: Perseus-Basic Books; 2000, 2002), pp. 23-28. Research on this weather system is only a few decades old and still so much in its early stages that one writer connects it with the Arctic Oscillation and comments that “no one yet knows what it does;” Marq de Villiers, Windswept: The Story of Wind and Weather (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart; 2006), p. 94. On the state of knowledge before that date see E.J. Prager and S.A. Earle, The Oceans, pp. 128-129, and M. McCartney, “North Atlantic Oscillation,” Oceanus, 39 (1996), No. 2, p. 13. An odd example of how one European freeze-up affected naval history is the capture of the Dutch battle fleet, which was caught frozen in Holland’s Issel Meer by French cavalry in January 1795; see Erik Durschmied, The Weather Factor: How Nature Has Changed History (London: Hodder and Stoughton-Cornet; 2000), pp. 72-86.

Southern Oscillation” or ENSO. First identified by Chilean fishers and reported in 1892 by the Peruvian captain Camilo Carrillo, this system is named “El Nino,” or “the boy-child” or “Infant Christ,” because it usually occurs around the time of Christmas. In the 1920s it was first plotted by the British meteorologist Sir Gilbert Walker who, while studying the Indian Ocean’s monsoons, identified the Pacific’s “Southern Oscillation” and its relationship to those other seasonal wind systems.<sup>27</sup> During “normal” conditions, the strong east-to-west trade winds along the equator drag water away from the South American coast. This results in low pressures and high sea levels in the western Pacific near Indonesia and northern Australia, high pressures and low sea levels in the Eastern Pacific off Central and South America, and the “up-welling” of the colder and nutrient-rich Peru Current with plankton that sustains numerous sea-birds and the local anchovy fisheries. With the advent of an El Nino event, however, the trade winds slacken, which brings low air pressures and a build-up of high sea levels with warm surface water in the eastern Pacific that prevents the up-welling of the Peru Current, resulting in the starvation of fish and bird life along the South American Pacific west coast, and dryer conditions over Indonesia. These conditions, which may last from six to eighteen months, force the jet stream into a sudden lurch northwards so as to subjugate the American West Coast with severe storms and heavy rains. In addition, by blocking the normal flow of moist air, an El Nino may cause exceptionally heavy rains over the

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Brian M. Fagan, Floods, Famines and Emperors: El Nino and the Fate of Civilizations (London: Pimlico; 2000), pp. 16-22.

Galapagos Islands and Peru; drought in northeastern Brazil, Australia and Southeast Asia; and both floods and droughts in the African and American interiors. But on the positive side, it also seemingly inhibits the development of hurricanes over the Atlantic.<sup>28</sup> As a consequence, beginning in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt, El Nino “events” have had a global reach and left their mark upon our history.<sup>29</sup>

Rather than a simple return to normalcy, an El Nino sometimes reverses as the surface temperatures cool so that the Pacific waters become unusually cold. Originally known to Chilean fishers as el Viejo (“the old guy”), events of this type have been dubbed La Nina (“the girl child”) by the American press. They are less well understood than the El Nino, but they appear to result from an overcompensation for the latter by the sky and ocean. In terms of the global climate, La Nina years tend to be cooler than those of the El Ninos, with uncommonly cold winter temperatures in the American Northeast, warmer ones in the Southwest, stronger Indian monsoons and Atlantic trade

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The fullest account of these phenomena is Michael Glantz, Currents of Change: Impacts of El Nino and La Nina on Climate and Society, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 2001). Also see John Lynch, The Weather (Toronto, Ont.: Firefly Books; 2002), pp. 98-104; George Ochoa, Jennifer Hoffman and Tina Tin, Climate: The Force That Shapes Our World and the Future of Life on Earth (London: Rodale International; 2005), pp.66-68.

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The past impact of such events are detailed in Ibid., pp. 65-81; Cesar N. Caviedes, El Nino in History: Storming Through the Ages (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida; 2001); Brian M. Fagan’s Floods, Famines and Emperors: El Nino and the Fate of Civilizations, and more generally in his The Long Summer: How Climate Changed Civilization (New York: Basic Books; 2004).

winds, a range of other extreme meteorological occurrences, but – fewer hurricanes. These last aside, such events are often devastating as was indicated by that of 1999. During that winter the New York and Buffalo were buried in 1.5 meters of snow; temperatures from minus 32 to minus 55 degrees Fahrenheit struck the north from Indiana to Maine; and, when the frigid air masses hit warmer temperatures from the south on 17 January, thirty-two tornadoes touched down across Mississippi, Arkansas and Tennessee, followed by another 52 across the South during the rest of that month.<sup>30</sup>

Similar oscillation systems are still being identified elsewhere. One such, which research suggests is connected with the above-mentioned NAO, is the Arctic Oscillation (AO), which circulates at high-level, stratospheric levels above the polar regions. Although its cycles last only a few months, and possibly even only a few weeks, they have significant consequences. When in its cold or negative phase, this “AO” brings high pressure to the Arctic regions, along with lower-than-normal pressures in the mid-latitudes, and hinders the movement of cold surface air southward. This results in warmer temperatures in cities from Moscow to London, and Boston the Vancouver. But when in a “positive” or warm cycle, the AO creates low pressures in the Arctic and,

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Apart from the works cited in footnote 2 26-29 above, see M. de Villiers, Windswept, pp. 92-93, and E.J. Prager and S.A. Earle, The Oceans, pp. 115-140, deal with the effects of wind systems and the oceans on the climate at length. Also see P.J. Webster and J.A. Curry, “The Oceans and Weather,” in Scientific American Presents, 9 (1998), No. 3, 38-43; J. Lynch, The Weather, pp. 81-125, who notes that 15 of the estimated 28 El Ninos were followed by La Ninas. For other brief introductions to El Nino/La Nina, see J.D. Neelin and M. Latif, “El Nino Dynamics,” Physics Today, 51 (December 1998), No. 12, 32-36, and S. Hutchinson and L.E. Hawkins, Oceans, pp. 48-49.

paradoxically, spreads extreme cold through Europe and America. Among other possibly similar systems is a Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO), which occurred only twice in the last century and may be merely a large-scale El Nino, but which seems to affect the frequency and strength of Atlantic hurricanes and Pacific typhoons. Another is the still mysterious Quasi-Biennial Oscillation (QBO), identified in the 1950s and during which winds in the lower stratosphere over the tropics abruptly change direction roughly every twenty-eight months. Still one other is the Antarctic Oscillation, which serves as a counterpart to that in the northern polar regions.<sup>31</sup> As for the famous monsoons, which term is derived from the Arabic word mausim (season), these are part of a seasonal wind system that dominates the currents of the Indian Ocean. Whereas currents in all other oceans flow in the same direction all year round, in the Indian Ocean they change direction at least twice yearly. This is due to the shifting monsoon winds in accord to the summer heating and winter cooling of the Northern Hemisphere. As a result, in summer the prevailing winds push currents and rains east towards India, but in winter they force them west towards Africa. In this manner the monsoons largely control the seasonal

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M. de Villiers, Windswept, pp. 93-96. It is interesting that when a hole appeared in the ozone layer over the Antarctic, the winds associated with this oscillation were exceptionally frigid and seemingly slowed the region's warming. Once the hole disappeared, however, that last again began to accelerate, as did glacial melting. For recent comments on oceanic environmental and climate problems and research, see Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., "Greater Climate Awareness Ushers in New Ocean Era," Sea Technology, 49 (January 2008), No. 1, pp. 10-11; Howard Cattle, "Developments in CLIVAR's Ocean Activities," Ibid., pp. 14-15, and Joseph A. Byrne, "New Maritime Administration Office [of] Overseas Environment, Compliance," Ibid., pp. 19-20.

weather of the lands bordering that ocean.<sup>32</sup>

### **Winds, Man and the Architecture of the Sea**

In fact, as recent studies of El Nino and the other systems mentioned illustrate, such weather systems have had an immense impact on most aspects of all human societies throughout history, and most obviously and immediately, on the coastal states involved in seafaring. In today's world it is often forgotten that until the rise of ocean-going steam vessels in the mid-1800s, shipping depended upon wind power. Furthermore, in pre-industrial societies from the Upper Palaeolithic to that date, a boat or later, a ship "was the largest and most complex machine produced."<sup>33</sup> As a consequence, seasonal wind patterns everywhere determined when and where a ship could sail and as a result, Fernandez-Armesto insists that the nature of the wind systems involved, even more than

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J. Lynch, The Weather, pp. 94-99; E.J. Prager and S.A. Earle, The Oceans, pp. 122-123, 128; M. De Villiers, Windswept, pp. 92-93; S. Hutchinson and L.E. Hawkins, Oceans, p. 30. George Ochoa, et al., Climate, p. 219, notes that monsoon conditions are also found in parts of Africa, eastern Asia, northern Australia, and even the southwest United States. The weather patterns and their impacts on the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia and East Asia are detailed in A.M. Learmouth, Monsoon Asia (London: Hulton Educational Publications; 1966), and their impact on maritime affairs in Richard Natkiel and Antony Preston, Atlas of Maritime History (New York: Facts On File; 1986), pp. 19, 37, 40, 45-47; George F. Hourani, Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University; 1951), and more recently in Michael Pearson, The Indian Ocean (London and New York: Routledge; 2003), especially pp. 19-23, as well as Dionisius A. Agius, Seafaring in the Arabian Gulf and Oman: The People of the Dhow (London: Kegan Paul; 2005).

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Himanshu Prabha Ray and Jean-Francois Salles, eds., Tradition and Archaeology: Early Maritime Contacts in the Indian Ocean (New Delhi: Manohar; 1996), p. 1.

the associated currents, are the central factor in maritime history. “Throughout the age of sail...,” he writes with only some exaggeration, “winds determined what man could do at sea: by comparison, culture, ideas, individual genius or charisma, economic forces and all the other motors of history meant little.” For this reason, he adds that most traditional explanations of historical events with a maritime dimension have “too much hot air and not enough wind.”<sup>34</sup> On this basis he argues that the Europeans’ “Age of Exploration” or “Discovery” only became possible after the voyages of Christopher Columbus (beginning in 1492), that of John Cabot (1497), and Vasco da Gama’s successful rounding of the Cape of Good Hope in the following year (1498) had combined “to crack the code of the Atlantic wind system..” Rather than forming a barrier to the peoples of the European seaboard, now “the ocean became a means of access to previously unimaginable empires and trades,” and a “link” to the rest of the world. In the short term, the way was open for the creation of an “Atlantic civilization” because “navigator now knew the routes of reliable, regular communication between the western shores of the Old World and the eastern shores of the New,” while da Gama’s success in using the southeast trade winds and “roaring forties” revealed wind systems that “provided easy access to the great wind-borne thoroughfares that cross the world.”<sup>35</sup>

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F. Fernandez-Armesto, Civilizations, p. 488..

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Ibid., p. 490-491, 496-497. A diagram of normal atmospheric circulation is available in Kirstin Dow and Thomas E. Downing, The Atlas of Climate Change: Mapping the World’s Greatest Challenge, rev. ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of

Along with the associated currents and the tides, winds thus make up a major component of what Fernandez-Armesto calls the “architecture of the sea.”<sup>36</sup> But if the general contours of the Atlantic began emerging in the late 1400s, the immediate details that directly affected the work and lives of seamen remained as unpredictable as ever. Thus the winds, the same force that made the use of sails possible, were simultaneously a constant source of possible catastrophe for sailors, shipowners, passengers, and merchant-shippers alike. “There is something beyond the horizon,” wrote the great French novelist Victor Hugo. “Something terrible. It is the wind ... or, rather that populace of Titans which we call the gale.” For, he tells us:

They come from the immeasurable deep. Their wide wings need the breath of the ocean gulf; the spaciousness of desert solitudes. The Atlantic, the Pacific – those vast blue plains – are their delight. They hasten thither in flocks. Commander Page witnessed far out at sea, seven waterspouts at once. They wander there, wild and terrible! The ever-ending yet eternal flux and reflux is their work. The extent of their power, the limits of their will, none know. They are the Sphinxes of the abyss: [Vasco da] Gama was their Oedipus. In that dark, ever-moving expanse, they appear with faces of cloud. He who perceives their pale lineaments in that wide dispersion, the horizon of the sea, feels himself in presence of an unsubduable power. It might be that the proximity of human intelligence disquieted them, and that they revolted against it. The mind of man is invincible, but the elements baffle him. He can do nothing against the power which is everywhere, and which none can bind. The gentle breath becomes a gale, smites with the force of a war-club, and then becomes gentle again. The winds attack with a terrible crash, and defend themselves by fading into nothingness. He who would encounter them must use artifice. Their varying tactics, their swift redoubled blows, confuse. They fly as often as they attack. They are tenacious and impalpable. Who can circumvent them. ... They assume the

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California; 2006), p.32

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F. Fernandez-Armesto, *Civilizations*, p. 381. Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, pp. 24-26, speaks of a sea’s “deep structure” which, apart from winds, involves the geography of currents, tides and waves, sea levels, patterns of coastal erosion and silting, rainfall levels, and so on.



dictatorship of chaos.

Chaos is theirs, in which to wreak their mysterious vengeance: the den of the winds is more monstrous than that of lions. How many corpses lie in its deep recesses, where the howling gusts sweep without pity over that obscure and ghastly mass! The winds are heard wheresoever they go, but they give ear to none. Their acts resemble crimes. None know on whom they cast their hoary surf; with what ferocity they hover over shipwrecks, looking at times as if they flung their impious foam-flakes in the face of Heaven. They are the tyrants of unknown regions....<sup>37</sup>

Among those tyrants, none are more dangerous and terrifying for both mariners and coastal dwellers alike than the massive storms which are known in the Atlantic as hurricanes,<sup>38</sup> in the Indian Ocean as cyclones, and in the Pacific as typhoons. All, however, are alike in that they are cyclonic storms that form in all tropical oceans, the South Atlantic and Southeast Pacific excepted. They are formed due to action of the summer sun on Ocean's surface which results in particularly numerous thunderstorms collecting in low-pressure areas known as tropical waves, some of which develop into tropical depressions. When the sustained wind in a depression reach a force of 39 miles-per-hour (62 kph), it becomes a tropical storm, and if the latter's rotation becomes "well-organized," with a fall in central pressure and winds sustained at 74 miles-per-hour (118.5 kpm), it is recognized as a cyclone or in the Atlantic, hurricane. This last term may come from the Mayan storm god "Hurukan," or from other Caribbean words that

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Victor Hugo, The Toilers of the Sea, illus. E.S. Hodgson (London and Glasgow: Collins Clear-Type Press; n.d.), "The Winds of the Opea Sea," pp. 330-333, quote 330-331.

<sup>38</sup>

Although ususally associated with the mid-Atlantic, such storms can be deadly in the North Atlantic as well. For example, one such struck the Labrador's Eskimo coast in the autumn of 1885, catching many fishers homeward-bound after the summer fishery. This storm destroyed sixty-five vessels and killed over seventy people, many women and children included; see Maura Hanrahan, Domino: The Eskimo Coast Disaster (St. John's, NFLD: Flanker Press; 2006).

have been translated as “big wind” or “evil spirit.” Whatever the case, such Atlantic tempests were first experienced and described by Columbus who wrote in July 1494 that “nothing but the service of God and the extension of the monarchy would induce him to expose himself to such dangers.” Apart from high winds and heavy rainfalls, these cyclones are sometimes accompanied by destructive tornados or “twisters,” and by storm surges that inflict heavy damage on coastal communities. At present are classified into five categories, depending on their winds and surge. A Category One, for example, has winds of 75 to 95 miles-per-hour (120-152 kph) and a surge of 4-5 feet (c.1.5m) above normal, but a Category Five has sustained blasts of over 155 miles-per-hour (250 kph) and storm surge of over 18 feet (5-6m).<sup>39</sup> Similarly, in the Indian Ocean the Monsoons frequently develop into a tropical cyclone with sustained winds of 58 miles-per-hour (120 kph), and sometime of 125 with gusts of up to 250 miles-per-hour (200 to 400 kph).<sup>40</sup>

Practically speaking, until the late 1800s fishers and mariners received little help from science in predicting the arrival of such tempests. True, Benjamin Franklin had discovered the direction followed by “nor’easters” in the 1740s, another American had

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This brief account of cyclones and hurricanes is based on Jay Barnes, Florida’s Hurricane History, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., foreword Steve Lyons (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina; 2007), pp. 6-9, 13-28, in general, and on Columbus in particular, p. 40. Victor Hugo, The Toilers of the Sea, p. 331, records that Columbus, having observed the winds’ approach, “mounted upon the poop, and addressed them with the first verses of St. John’s Gospel.” In a similar tradition, the prayers of Hans Egede, the apostle to Greenland, are said to have calmed a storm; see Peter Freuchen with David Loth, Peter Freuchen’s Book of the Seven Seas (New York: Julian Messner, 1957), p. 477.

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M. Pearson, The Indian Ocean, pp. 19-20.

described hurricanes as monster “whirlwinds” in 1831, and the Englishman Henry Paddington, sent to India to study such tropical storms, had confirmed this conclusion a little later and coined the term “cyclone” from the Greek for “coils of a snake.” More important still was the work in collecting data and tracking storms carried out by the Jesuit Benito Vines, who died in 1893 in Havana, Cuba. Yet it was not until the Spanish-American War of 1898 that the United States Weather Bureau made serious efforts at hurricane forecasting.<sup>41</sup> Earlier, both fishers and seamen had been forced instead to rely on their inherited stock of traditional weather lore. Indeed, experienced mariners since the days of the Greek poet Hesiod,<sup>42</sup> and undoubtedly even much earlier, had recognized the existence of seasonal weather patterns. None, of course, had any real idea of the factors involved and it is unlikely working seamen would have wasted time with such pseudo-scientific explanations as that offered by Victor Hugo’s for the “time of tempests.” This “grand descent of winds upon the world,” that writer explained, “takes place at the equinoxes” when “the balance of tropic and pole oscillates, and the vast atmospheric tides pour their flood upon one hemisphere and their ebb upon another. The signs of Libra and Aquarius have reference to these phenomena.”<sup>43</sup>

If almost all mariners and fishers regularly considered seasonal injunctions in their long-term planning, in their day-to-day activities it was much more important that they

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<sup>41</sup>

J. Barnes, Florida’s Hurricane History, pp. 32-33.

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See the advice on sailing seasons in Hesiod, Work and Days, in Richard Garnett, et al., The Book of Literature: A Comprehensive Anthology, 34 vols. (New York: The Grolier Society; 1922, 1923), 3, pp. 99-103.

<sup>43</sup>

V. Hugo, The Toilers of the Sea, p. 334.

could “read the sea” and the skies for signs of more immediate changes in weather. Hugo understood this full well and maintained that Ocean assumes a “singular” aspect before a major storm when observed by “those who are familiar with the sea.”<sup>44</sup> Similarly, the folklore of seamen the world over recognizes a “mackerel sky” and “mare’s tails” as a sign of approaching changes in weather conditions, know that a red sky in the morning is a warning sign, but that one at night is “a sailor’s delight.” Such portents, of course, have a real basis in nature: the cloud formations known as “mare’s tails” usually follow the passing of a cold front, the clouds resembling fish scales in a mackerel sky often precede warm fronts, and some animals and birds are especially sensitive to changes in air pressure, and so on.<sup>45</sup> But other means of prediction, such as the appearance of meteors and comets, or astrological forecasts based on planetary alignments, are indicative of the deep superstitions often found among seafarers. “It is no exaggeration,” writes British folklorist Steve Roud, “to state that fishing communities have been the most superstitious of all, and especially the fishermen themselves.” This, he points out, is because “the men face such dangers, and are at the mercy of the elements, day after day,

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Ibid., pp. 334-335.

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J. Barnes, Florida’s Hurricane History, p. 32, who points to such phenomena as nervous cats, birds and bats flying lower than usual, and bees returning to their hives. The particular adages are as common in Nova Scotia as elsewhere; see, for example, Helen Dacey Wilson, Tales from Barrett’s Landing: A Childhood in Nova Scotia, illus. George Munro (Toronto, Ont., and Montreal, PQ: n.p.; c. 1964), pp. 103-104; Mary L. Fraser, Folklore of Nova Scotia [1929] (Antigonish, NS: Formac reprint; c. 1977), p. 92, who replaces “red sky” with “rainbow,” and adds the warning: “Heavy winds kick up a rain.” For more on weather lore and such sayings among mariners in general, see Frank Shay, A Sailor’s Treasury, (New York: W.W. Norton; 1951), and Horace Beck, Folklore and the Sea (Middletown and Mystic Seaport, CT: Wesleyan University-Marine Historical Association, Inc.; 1977, 1979), pp.77-103.

that their beliefs seek to compensate for the perceived lack of control over their own fate.” The same is true of mariners in general, for whom such “beliefs reveal a keen sense of the symbolic action which translates into bad luck aboard ship. Thus they avoid turning buckets upside down, and anything to do with water must be carefully controlled.” Like fishers, sailors have traditionally believed in the significance of luck, be it good or bad, and recognized that a knowledge of the folkways which could threaten catastrophe on the one hand, or guarantee a successful voyage on the other, are as much the shared heritage of their profession as of that of a tightly knit fishing “community which is inwardly rather than outwardly focused.”<sup>46</sup>

Since weather in general, and winds in particular, are important elements in such “luck” and successes, they both have been the subject of numerous spells and taboos. Space does not permit a full discussion of this issue here, but a few examples suffice to demonstrate their universality. One such is the well-known practice of “whistling for the wind,” a phrase still used by yachtsmen to this day. But if the sailor who does so is now regarded simply as “a harmless, superstitious bloke,” such was not always the case.<sup>47</sup>

“The seamen,” wrote one English author in the latter 1680s, “will not endure to have one

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Steve Roud, The Penguin Guide to the Superstitions of Britain and Ireland (London: Penguin; 2003, 2006), p. 194. H. Beck, Folklore and the Sea, pp. 279-313, deals with superstition in general, and devotes separate sections to ghost ships, sea monsters, mermaids, and so on. The importance of “luck” among Spanish deep-sea fishers is discussed at length in Joseba Zulaika, Terranova: The Ethos and Luck of Deep-Sea Fishermen (St. John's, NFLD: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Study No. 25; 1981). pp. 76-77, while Christer Westerdahl, "Seal on Land, Elk at Sea: Notes on and Applications of the Ritual Landscape at the Seaboard," The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology, 34 (April 2005), No. 1, pp. 3-8 examines this and related issues in Scandinavia..

<sup>47</sup>Gillian Tindall, A Handbook of Witches (London: Arthur Barker; 1965), pp 106-107

whistle on shipboard: Believing that it raises winds;” and he recorded that when another authority had “begun to whistle accidentally” while travelling on the Elbe River in Germany, “the Watermen presently disliked [this], and would have him rather to forbear.”<sup>48</sup> Two centuries later matters remain little changed among mariners of all stripes. “Sailors will not whistle during a voyage, nor will those who steer the pleasure boats allow any passengers to do so,” reported one Yorkshireman in 1869, and he added that an old timer told him that “we only whistle when the wind is asleep, and then the breeze comes.”<sup>49</sup> Similar beliefs were recorded on the Isle of Man and elsewhere in Britain while in the northern counties and the Borders, sailors long dreaded whistling women as raisers of wind. As late as 1868 one Scarborough captain even “flatly refused to take a young girl on board his vessel because he had heard her whistle....”<sup>50</sup> Similarly, across the Atlantic, Nova Scotians warned each other: “Don't whistle on a ship or wind will come up and you will get too much of it.” Bluenoses forbade use of the word “pig” on board a ship for the same reason, believed that tossing a coin over the side brings a storm, but recommended sticking a knife in a spar if wind was required.<sup>51</sup> Other similar

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John Aubrey, Remaines of Gentilisme, 1686-7, ed. J. Britten (London: Folk Lore Society; 1881), quoted in Christina Hole, A Mirror of Witchcraft (London: Chatto and Windus; 1957), pp. 132-133.

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Notes and Queries (1869), quoted in Steve Roud, Penguin Guide to Superstitions of Britain and Ireland, p. 518. He notes similar superstitions against whistling in mines.

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C. Hole, A Mirror of Whitchcraft , p.128.

51

Helen Creighton, ed., Bluenose Magic: Popular Beliefs and Superstitions in Nova Scotia (Toronto, Ont.: Ryerson Press; 1968), pp. 117-119, 122-123.

prohibitions included the clipping nails or cutting hair at sea, a superstition which dates from at least Roman times, combing hair,<sup>52</sup> and the use numerous “forbidden” or nao words.<sup>53</sup>

Such relatively passive precautions aimed largely at avoiding storms, and their origins still remain shrouded in mystery. But periods of no wind, or even contrary wind, were equally costly and, on occasion, deadly. Consequently, throughout recorded history mariners have sought more active means of intervening to create or control winds, and for this they turned to local witches and sorcerers. Given their baleful influence over winds and storms, these figures led a form of “double life” that earned them both fear and respect. After all, their alleged powers over wind and weather meant they could halt or help a ship at sea, and so bring disaster on some occasions, a triumph on others, and in either case benefit themselves financially in the process.<sup>54</sup> As with maritime taboos,

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Sir James G. Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, abridged ed. (New York: Macmillan; 1951), p. 273, who notes that no Scottish Highland girl with a brother at sea would comb her hair at night. The Roman satirist Petronius, The Satyricon, trans. and intro. William Arrowsmith (New York: New American Library-Mentor Classic; 1960, 1964), pp. 109-116, describes the horror of Roman mariners for the cutting of hair and nails at sea.

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“Noa” words are illustrated and discussed in H. Creighton, Bluenose Magic, pp. 118-119, C. Westerdahl, “Seal on Land, Elk at Sea: Notes on and Applications of the Ritual Landscape at the Seaboard,” pp. 4-6; and Sheila Gear, Foula: Island West of the Sun (London: Robert Hale; 1983), p. 45. More generally see H. Beck, Folklore and the Sea on “Names on the Sea” (pp. 31-55) and “Language,” pp. 57-75.

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The “dual-nature” of witches and magicians is discussed in Emile Grillo De Givry, A Pictorial Anthology of Witchcraft, Magic and Alchemy, trans. J. Courtenay Locke (London: Spottiswoode, Ballantyne; 1931). Facsimile reprint: (Chicago and New York: University Books; 1958), pp. 177-178. Typical in this regard are the mixed roles filled by one Marion Richart, a witch in Scotland’s Northern Islands. On the one hand, she performed spells to improve fishermen’s luck by use of water in which a cat’s feet were

active wind spells and those casting them are international and near timeless in nature. Folklore pioneer James Frazer describes the use of a “wind-stone” to rouse a wind or hurricane in New Guinea, notes that a family at ancient Corinth was reputed to be capable of stilling a raging wind, and recalls that in the reign of the Emperor Constantine a certain Sopater was executed in Constantinople for “binding the wind by magic, because it happened the corn-ships of Egypt and Syria were detained afar off by calms or headwinds, to the rage and disappointment of the hungry Byzantine rabble....” Later a newly birthed mother in Greenland was supposed to be able to lay a storm for some time after their delivery by going out of doors, filling “her mouth with air, and coming back into the house blow it out again....” Scottish witches, he continues, meanwhile supposedly raised winds by beating a wet rag thrice on a stone while chanting:

I knok this rag upone this stane  
To raise the wind in the divellis name,  
It sall not lye till I please againe.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, instances of witches raising storms magically are a commonplace in British witchcraft trials, perhaps the most famous of which occurred in Scotland in 1590. Then the North Berwick witches confessed that as a coven led by Agnes Sampson, they had caused a storm, by throwing a christened cat into the sea, in an attempt to wreck the ship

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washed, combined with an incantation. But on the other, when a skipper refused her alms, he reportedly suddenly went mad while at sea, tried to leap overboard, and when his son prevented this, the latter went mad as well, until a crewman took a dog that was on the boat and made it bleed on his shoulders. This saved all on board, though the dog went mad and all the dogs on shore ‘gaue yow abundantly;’ John R. Tudor, The Orkneys and Shetland; Their Past and Present State (London: Edward Stanford; 1883), p. 100.

<sup>55</sup>

Sir J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, p. 93.



carrying King James VI and his bride during their return from marrying in Denmark.<sup>56</sup>

Lesser witches, however, include Mother Gabley, found guilty in 1583 of drowning fourteen sailors "by moving eggs ritually about in a pail of water," and Elizabeth Harris of Faversham, who in 1645 admitted to cursing and wrecking a small sailing ship (or "hoy") as revenge for her son's death.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, there is the body of very old traditions of seamen obtaining favourable winds either as a gift or through purchase from a god or sorcerer . This, of course, is another world-wide as well as ancient tradition. The ancient Greek poet Homer reports that Ulysses received the winds needed for his homeward voyage from Troy in a leathern bag from Aeolus, King of the Winds, and similar cases can be cited from New Guinea (in a bamboo stock) in the Far East, and from Togo in Africa (in great pots).<sup>58</sup> Although found throughout maritime Europe as well, this practice is especially well documented in the Scandinavian north, and in areas influenced by the medieval Vikings, such as Orkney, the Shetlands, Lewis in the Hebrides, Wales and the Isle of Man.. In Scandinavia proper winds were raised or waters calmed, as requested, largely by

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<sup>56</sup>

G. Tindall, A Handbook of Witches , p. 113; C. Hole, A Mirror of Witchcraft, pp. 134-135; Also see the illustration in Venetia Newall, The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Magic, intro. Richard M. Dorson (New York: A & W Visual Library-Dial Press; 1974), p. 106. All these accounts are based on the contemporary, Newes from Scotland: Declaring the Damnable Life & Death of Dr. Fian, a notable Sorcerer, who was burned at Edinburgh in January last, 1591: Which Doctor was register to the Diuell.... (London, 1591), the authorship of which some attribute to James VI/I himself, and of which there is a facsimile in Dalhousie University's Killam Library.

<sup>57</sup>

C. Hole, A Mirror of Witchcraft, pp. 128-129, and p. 135 for the original records..

<sup>58</sup>

Sir J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, p. 94.

wizards, who often were Finns, Laplanders, Samis and Estonians. An illustration from the 1500s in the Swedish writer Olaus Magnus' Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus (History of the Northern Peoples) depicts a witch stirring up a storm and causing a ship to founder by emptying her cauldron into the sea. Another shows two navigators on a caravel's poop-deck who are bargaining for a piece of rope with three knots with a sorcerer standing on a rock jutting out of the sea. The three knots supposedly tie up winds, and the rope's owner was to get a gentle west-south-westerly breeze from untying the first, a moderately strong north wind from the second, and a fearful tempest from the third. In the background a seaman on a sinking vessel appears to anxiously wait the results of the bargaining.<sup>59</sup> Or as a later author explained, as the knots loosened, the winds strengthened from slight to fresh, from fresh to strong, and from strong to gale force.<sup>60</sup>

Belief in the efficacy of wind-knots was long lasting among Europe's seafarers. Writing in 1655 an English author remarked that "there are some people in Germany and Polonia, that do commonly sell Wind's by the Devil's help to Sea-men,"<sup>61</sup> and 150 years later another, especially popular novelist recorded its survival in the Scotland's Northern Isles. "It is well-known that the Laplanders drive [sic?] a profitable trade in selling winds," wrote Sir Walter Scott in his novel The Pirate,

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<sup>59</sup>

E. Grillot De Givry, Pictorial Anthology of Witchcraft, Magic and Alchemy, p. 178; Figures 151 and 152, p. 179.

<sup>60</sup>

C. Hole, A Mirror of Witchcraft, p. 128.

<sup>61</sup>

Thomas Ady A Candle in the Dark (London, 1655), quoted in Ibid.

but it is perhaps less notorious that within these few years such a commodity might be purchased on British ground, where it was likely to be in great request. At the village of Stromness, on the Orkney main island, called Pomona, lived, in 1814, an aged dame, called Bessie Millie, who helped out her subsistence by selling favourable winds to mariners. He was a venturesome master of a vessel who left the roadstead of Stromness without paying his offering to propitiate Bessie Millie. Her fee was extremely modest, being exactly sixpence; for which, as she explained herself, she boiled her kettle and gave the bark advantage of her prayers, because she disclaimed all unlawful arts. The wind petitioned for was sure, she said, to arrive, though occasionally the mariners had to wait some time for it. The woman's dwelling and appearance were not unbecoming her pretensions. Her house, which was on the brow of the steep hill on which Stromness is founded, was only accessible by a series of dirty and precipitous lanes; and for exposure might have been the abode of AEolus himself, in whose commodities the inhabitant dealt. She herself was, as she told us, nearly one hundred years old, withered and dried up like a mummy. A clay-coloured kerchief, folded round her head, corresponded in colour to her corpse like complexion. Two light-blue eyes that gleamed with a lustre like that of insanity, an utterance of astonishing rapidity, a nose and chin that almost met together, and a ghastly expression of cunning, gave her the effect of Hecate. ...Such was Bessie Millie, to whom the mariners paid a sort of tribute, with a feeling between jest and earnest.<sup>62</sup>

Perhaps more remarkable still is the survival of this custom into the twentieth century.

"Shetland seamen," Sir James Frazer reported in 1922, "still buy winds in the shape of knotted handkerchiefs or threads from old women who claim to rule the storms."<sup>63</sup>

Meanwhile, recognized religions around the globe have from the first employed their own incantations and blessings to placate Ocean and its dangers. Yet both the appeals and remedies offered by official religions and unofficial magic have in practice failed to

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<sup>62</sup>

Sir Walter Scott, The Pirate, in Redgauntlet [and] The Pirate (London, Edinburgh and New York: Thomas Nelson; n.d.), pp. 568-569.

<sup>63</sup>

Sir J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, p. 94. This practice was also found in the Mediterranean where, long after Ulysses, "Venetian seamen ... kept the winds they bought from sorcerers in the knotted corners of handkerchiefs;" G. Tindall, A Handbook of Witches, p. 114.

reliably alleviate the terrors that Victor Hugo's "tyrants" inflicted on mariners, and modern forecasting merely gives better warning of their approach. It therefore is easily understandable that many mariners continue to depend on their "luck" and undoubtedly would agreed with s veteran captain who explained: "I love going to sea. I do not love the sea out there. That is not my friend. That is my absolute 24-hour-a-day sworn enemy."<sup>64</sup>

### **The One Big Ocean**

A careful reader will note that I have been using the terms "Ocean," "the seas" and "the oceans" interchangeably. Although the last term has found general acceptance in recent centuries, we should remember David Armitage's caveats that our oceans are fundamentally "mythical," and that the "precise limits" that we use to define them are, "of course, fluid." Writing of the Atlantic, he observes that it "was a European invention," and although it was long in the Europeans' minds and found on their maps, its final definition was "the product of successive waves of navigation, exploration, settlement, administration, and imagination." Since this process was carried out by Europeans, Armitage credits them with inventing the Atlantic since they were "the first to connect its four sides into a single entity, both as a system and the representation of a discrete natural feature." Even so, he adds that the fluidity of its limits reflects the fact that "exactly where it ended was less clear than what it touched and what it connected..." especially "as long as 'the Ocean' was thought of as a single body of

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<sup>64</sup>

Quoted in M. Pearson, The Indian Ocean, p. 45. Also see his comments (pp. 39-41) on rites focused on the sea which, as a traveller in Mumbai put it, sought "to pacify its storms and Fury, and render it peaceable and calm."

circulating water rather than as seven distinct seas.”<sup>65</sup>

Although writing from in a different perspective, Halford Mackinder, the great British student of oceanic geopolitics, made this same point in 1919. While the “physical facts of geography have remained substantially the same during the fifty or sixty centuries of recorded human history,” he reminds us, “[e]ach century has had its own geographical perspective.” We must keep this in mind, he cautions, since the impact of geography upon human events depends “not merely on the realities as we now know them to be and to have been, but in even greater degree on what men imagined in regard to them.”

While the “ocean has been one throughout history, ... for effective human purposes there were two oceans, western and eastern, until the Cape of Good Hope was rounded only four hundred years ago.”<sup>66</sup> If this event (and subsequently Magellan’s voyage as well) demonstrated that the “ocean was one ocean all the time,” Mackinder argues that “...the practical meaning of that great reality was not wholly understood” until, with the discovery of the two poles, “the book of the pioneers has been closed.” Consequently, he concludes, the “geographical perspective of the twentieth century differs ... from that of all previous centuries in more than mere extension. In outline our geographical knowledge is now complete,” and in terms “of the physical, economic, military or political interconnection of things on the surface of the globe, we are now for the first

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David Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800 (Basingstoke, Hamps., and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2002), p. 12.

<sup>66</sup>

Harold J. Mackinder, Democratic Ideals and Reality, intro. Anthony J. Pearce (New York: W.W. Norton; 1962), pp. 28-29.

time presented with a closed system. The known does not fade any longer through the half-known into the unknown....”<sup>67</sup>

As for “the Seven Seas,” this tradition also dates from antiquity and reflects the need felt by geographers and others to divide an all-encompassing Ocean into more easily identifiable and discrete analytical entities.<sup>68</sup> By the time of Strabo, ancient geographers had recognized the existence of the Mediterranean (“The Sea”), the Black Sea (Sea of Pontus) and Red Sea, as well as the Atlanticus Oceanus (Atlantic, or Western, Ocean), an Oceanus Septentrionalis (Northern Ocean), an Ethiopicus Oceanus (Ethiopian Ocean), and an Oceanus Indicus (Indian Ocean).<sup>69</sup> In time the expression “seven seas” passed into common usage as a reference to “all the waters which cover the earth.”<sup>70</sup> In this sense it was used by Edward Fitzgerald (1809-1883) in one version of his famous translations of the Persian poet Omar Khayyam’s (c.1048-c.1131) Rubaiyat.<sup>71</sup> Even so,

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<sup>67</sup>

Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>68</sup>

For a detailed discussion of this process, see Martin W. Lewis, “Dividing the Ocean Sea,” Geographical Review, 89 (1999), pp. 188-214.

<sup>69</sup>

See the map “Eratosthenes and Strabo, B.C. 200 to A.D. 20,” in P. Freuchen with D. Loth, Peter Freuchen’s Book of the Seven Seas, p. 34. At the same time Freuchen himself (p. 35) lists the “Seven Seas” of antiquity as being the Mediterranean, Red, China, West African, East African Seas, the Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean.

<sup>70</sup>

Peter Kemp, ed., The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University; 1988), p. 733.

<sup>71</sup>

In Ibid., Kemp quotes two two lines from stanza 47 as follows: “Which of our coming and departure heeds/ As the seven seas should heed a pebble-cast.” But later Fitzgerald revised the last line to read: “As the Sea’s self should heed a pebble cast; “The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam,” in James Stephens, et al., eds., Victorian and Later English Poets (New York: American Book Co.; 1934, 1949), p. 907.

Freuchen insists that by Fitzgerald's day people spoke of the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans (and a multitude of seas), and that the phrase "Seven Seas" had more or less disappeared until it was revived by Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936). In 1896 the latter entitled his new book of poems, The Seven Seas, after which these were identified as the North Atlantic, South Atlantic, North Pacific, South Pacific, Indian, Arctic, and Antarctic Oceans.<sup>72</sup>

Since Freuchen's book the term "Seven Seas" has again fallen into disuse, and the seven oceans reduced to four or, since 2000, five. In part this reduction had been achieved by abandoning references to the Antarctic, and in part by dropping the division between the North and South Atlantics and Pacifics. Earlier this had been justified by the existence of the "doldrums – a wide and rather shifting belt of calm air near the equator between the prevailing wind and current systems of the Northern and Southern Hemispheres," and their respective clockwise and counterclockwise patterns of system motion. But the demonstration that there were, in fact, only four main seabed basins (Atlantic, Pacific, Indian and Arctic) had forced this revision. Even so, we still speak the "North Atlantic" or "South Pacific," just as we did in the 1800s, without suggesting that they are separate oceans per se. The Atlantic and Pacific, the two largest, initially absorbed the Antarctic as well.<sup>73</sup> But in 2000 the International Hydrographic

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<sup>72</sup>

P. Freuchen with D. Loth, Peter Freuchen's Book of the Seven Seas, p. p. 33.

<sup>73</sup>

In fact, in the mid-1930s William Koelbel already had maintained that "the sea" is divided into three "principal" oceans (the Pacific, Atlantic and Indian), along with the lesser seas," and argued that although the Arctic is "commonly known as an ocean," its small area meant it "is more logically grouped with the seas;" see his The Seas and the Oceans, pp. 4-5

Organization (IHO) officially restored the Antarctic to the category of “ocean,” with a boundary set at 60 degrees South Latitude, but renamed it the Southern Ocean.<sup>74</sup> The fourth largest of oceans, it now is recognized as encircling the continent of Antarctica and “forming a virtual moat that helps to isolate and keep frozen the sixth largest continent that is only 2% ice free.”<sup>75</sup>

Each of these oceans, writes Freuchen, “has its own individuality, and not just differences in size and shape,” as well as its other self-contained, distinctive geographic, geologic, botanical and historical features. The Atlantic, for example, receives almost half of the world’s rainfall, in large part as runoff through the great rivers running into it, largely in its northern portion. In relation to its size, the Pacific receives least. The North Atlantic is the saltiest (next to the Red Sea and Persian Gulf), while the Arctic and Southern (or Antarctic), which are constantly diluted by melting ice, are least salt.<sup>76</sup> In terms of today’s boundaries, the Southern is unique in as much as it is defined by “a subtle band of sea surface change called the Antarctic Convergence.” This forms an irregular border with a drop of 5-10 degrees Fahrenheit in sea temperature, that varies from between 48 to 60 degrees South Latitude.<sup>77</sup> The Arctic, on the other hand, is almost

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S. Hutchinson and L.E. Hawkins, Oceans, p. 26; M. Pearson, The Indian Ocean, p. 15. Such borders are then recorded in an updated edition the United Nations Oceans Atlas.

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Don Walsh, “The Southern Ocean: Where the Lands End,” U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, 132 (March 2006), No. 3/1237, p. 88.

<sup>76</sup>

P. Freuchen with D. Loth, Peter Freuchen’s Book of the Seven Seas, pp. 35-38.

<sup>77</sup>

D. Walsh, “The Southern Ocean,” p. 88.



completely landlocked by the North American and Eurasian coastlines while the boundaries of the other three are also formed by the “coasts of the continental landmasses at their margins, or by major underwater features such as ocean ridges.” In addition, these major oceans contain within their areas smaller seas, gulfs, and so on. These usually are delimited by clear geographical features, such as the landlocked Baltic, Mediterranean or Black Seas, or by some other more or less obvious feature like the masses of accumulated seaweed of the South Atlantic’s Sargasso Sea.<sup>78</sup> But as the use of underwater features, current conversions and other oceanographic characteristics indicates, changes in scientific knowledge, as well as in historical interpretation and cultural perceptions, are a major part of process of “inventing” our seas and oceans.<sup>79</sup>

This division of Ocean into oceans and seas is in many ways symbolic of the present state of marine studies. If the modern science of oceanography, like academic maritime

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<sup>78</sup>

S. Hutchinson and L.E. Hawkins, Oceans, p. 26.

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The early history of oceanography to the 1960s is recounted in recounted in R.C. Cowan, Frontiers of the Sea, pp. 14-44, and in Pierre de Latil and Jean Rivoire, Man and the Underwater World, trans. Edward Fitzgerald (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons; 1956). Although great progress has been made by 2000, we still had only explored less than 5 percent of our planet’s oceans and major challenges remained; E.J. Prager and S.A. Earle, The Oceans, p. xii. The renaissance of oceanographic studies during the 1950s-1960s is described in Daniel Behrman, The New World of the Oceans: Men and Oceanography (Boston: Little, Brown; 1969). On work since 1970 and possible future developments, again see Prager and Earle, The Oceans, pp. x-xiv, 287-297, which also has a good bibliography. Consequently, new discoveries may yet once again force us to revise our definitions of the world’s oceans. Other useful modern studies include S.A. Earle’s own Sea Change: A Message of the Oceans (New York: G.P. Putnam; 1995); W.J. Broad, The Universe Below: Discovering the Secrets of the Deep Sea (New York: Simon and Schuster-Touchstone; 1997); K. Stowe, Exploring Ocean Science, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: John Wiley; 1996); and the US National Research Council, Opportunities in Ocean Sciences: Challenges on the Horizon (Washington, DC: Ocean Studies Board-National Academy Press; 1998).

history, only developed over the last century, at present there is a danger that like Ocean and the Seven Seas, this discipline will disintegrate into discrete “oceanic studies,” each of which is pursued in relative isolation from its fellows. This point was made most recently in a sharp editorial in the industry journal Sea Technology. “The marine sector conducts itself in such a dysfunctional and compartmentalized manner,” writes Moya Crawford, “that it fails to attract the funding and influence it ought to, considering its fiefdom – water – covers over two-thirds of the planet.” This state of affairs, she charges, is equally true in governmental, academic and industrial sectors. There are, furthermore, three basic reasons for how those operating “in such a fascinating environment – one that captures the imagination of practically every man on the street – ... collectively fail to convey the importance of what we do in terms of building both intellectual capacity and economic wealth....” Firstly, the organizations dominating the oceanic sector are now so large that for the most part, they are “impenetrable to outsiders.” Then, secondly, there are “the cultural schisms between [the] research, oil and gas and military sectors, which manifest themselves in an atmosphere of suspicion and mutual distrust,” and finally, and “probably most distressing of all,” there is the reality “that personal interaction, observation and spending our time where the action is are so limited that we’ve lost the overall feel for our subject matter and, therefore, our passion.” More basically, she blames the fact that the study of Ocean has now become “overwhelmingly bureaucratic,” and is so infected by “the many viruses of modern management,”<sup>80</sup>

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Moya Crawford, “Progress is in the Hands Of Unreasonable Individuals,” Sea Technology, 49 (July 2008), No. 7, p. 7. It is worth remembering that during the “Cold War” of the 1950s-1980s, a good deal of research in hydrography, salinity and so on was

presumably including the building of separate administrative empires, in an age when unity of vision may be vital for the salvation of the waters being studied.

These considerations aside, let us return to my own use of the term Ocean .... Given the mix of factors involved in establishing (or “constructing”) the limits and natures of individual seas and oceans, and the continuing changes in perceptions and definitions of the world’s oceans and seas over time, it seems to me more appropriate to use the singular “Ocean” in my search for the characteristics of a trans-national, or perhaps trans-oceanic frontier and its associated frontiersman. In this, of course, I merely follow the classical tradition. “Ocean” is derived from Oceanus, or Okeanus. This preference, however, is not some traditionalist whim or classical snobbery. Rather, apart from avoiding the problems and changes in defining individual seas and oceans, this choice reflects both an oceanographic and geographic reality. It also conveys the theoretical unity of the “Seven Seas” that has existed in geographical thought since the ancient Greeks, and the interconnections binding these seas within a common history since Ferdinand Magellan’s voyage of circumnavigation (1519-1522) which, as David Armitage admits, was long “thought of as a single body of circulating water rather than as seven distinct seas.”<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, for my purposes it also underlines the antiquity, unity and breadth of the oceanic frontier, and the commonality of experience of its

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classified “top secret” because of its utility for antisubmarine warfare (ASW) as described in Commander David D. Lewis, The Fight for the Sea: The Past, Present, and Future of Submarine Warfare in the Atlantic (New York: Crowell-Collier; 1961), chapters 17-19, and Drew Middleton, Submarine (New York: Playboy Press; 1976), chapters 5-10.

<sup>81</sup>

D. Armitage, “Three Concepts of Atlantic History,” p. 12.

frontiersmen.

### **The Tradition of Oceanus**

Let us begin this discussion with the tradition of Oceanus. An elemental Greek god, according to Hesiod's Theogony of the eighth century BC, he had resulted from the union of Earth (Gaea/Terra), who herself had emerged from Chaos, with the Sky or Heavens (Uranus/Coelus). Having taken Tethys as his consort, Oceanus in turn sired the other river and sea nymphs and lesser gods, known as the Oceanides. If some of these had dominion over important bodies of water, “deep-eddying Ocean” – as “the father of all rivers” – remained the mightiest of them all.<sup>82</sup> In comparison with Hesiod, the Ionian tradition, as presented in Homer, was “of a kind more readily understandable to those whose livelihood was the sea” inasmuch as water, not earth, was the primal entity, and Oceanus and Tethys were the parents of all the Gods.<sup>83</sup> Although he is “rarely depicted in Greek sculpture or pottery,... the Romans represented him as an old man with a flowing beard, sitting on the waves of the sea.”<sup>84</sup>

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Hesiod, “Theogony,” ll. 134-136, 337-370, 960-962, in Theogony-Work and Days-Testimonia, trans. and ed. Glenn W. Most (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University-Loeb Classical Library; 2006), pp. 12-15, 30-33, 80-81.

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The distinction between the Greeks’ two “origins” traditions is drawn in Barry Cunliffe, The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek (London And New York: Allen Lane-Penguin; 2001, 2003), pp. 24-26. The varied range of such creation myths, those of Oceanus as well as the other sea and water deities, are reviewed in Robert Graves, The Greek Myths, 2 vols. (London: The Folio Society; 1996), i, pp. 35-42, and Felix Guirand, ed., Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology, trans. Richard Aldington and Delano Ames (London: Paul Hamlyn; 1959), pp. 89-100, 166-172.

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Richard Ellis, Encyclopedia of the Sea (New York: Alfred A. Knopf-Borzoi; 2001), p. 240. For a Roman mosaic of Oceanus see the title pages in David Abulafia, ed., The Mediterranean in History (London and Los Angeles, CA: Thames and Hudson/ J. Paul

In either form of his myth, Oceanus is the perfect river, “swift and ever-flowing,” always deep, sometimes gentle, sometimes not, but “invariably briney,” within which the sun and stars rise and set as it encircles the “flat, disk-shaped” or “colourful oyster” that was believed to be shape of our Earth. Equally important, this Ocean stream has the geographical function of defining “the outer limits of an earth thought to be comprised mostly of land.”<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, Rachael Carson observes that this Ocean “was infinite; it was boundless,” and she goes on to remark that “if a person was to venture far out upon it – were such a course thinkable – he would pass through gathering darkness and obscuring fog and would come at last to a dreadful and chaotic blending of sea and sky, a place where whirlpools and yawning abysses waited to draw the traveler down into a dark world from which there was no return.” This vision, she tells us, is found “in varying forms” in the literature of the first millennia BC, and it keeps “recurring through the the greater part of the Middle Ages.”<sup>86</sup>

However accurate Carson’s description may be with respect to the ideas of the uneducated, it is clear that by the last centuries BC, most important Greek and Roman thinkers correctly conceived of our planet’s shape as a sphere.<sup>87</sup> Even so, with some

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Getty Museum; 2003).

<sup>85</sup>

Robert H. Fuson, Legendary Islands of the Ocean Sea (Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press; 1995), pp. xiii, 3-4; The "oyster" description is from Arthur Koestler, The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe (New York: Macmillan; 1959), p. 21.

<sup>86</sup>

R. Carson, The Sea Around Us (2003), p. 243.

<sup>87</sup>

Despite a persistent opinion to the contrary, belief in a spherical world survived the end

variations Ocean continued to fulfill this function of defining the central landmass on most ancient world maps. Unlike the modern and “post-modern” geographers referred to above, their first-century Greek forebear Strabo recognized full well the nature of the continents’ relationship to their surrounding Ocean. “Perception and experience alike,” he observed, “inform us that the earth we inhabit is an island; since wherever men have approached the termination of the land, the sea, which we designate ocean, has been met with; and reason assures of a similarity of those places which our senses have not been permitted to survey.”<sup>88</sup> In addition, the tradition continued that within Ocean, or perhaps at its farthest reaches, were the above-mentioned mythical islands – sometimes known as the “Isles of the Blessed” or “Fortunate Isles”<sup>89</sup> – where dwelled assorted mythical

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of the classical world and attempts to impose a biblical imprint on geographers by some of the Christian clergy. One such was the former sailor and later monk, Cosmos Indicopleutes. He insisted that the earth was square and flat and “wrote vehemently on the subject, asserting that the spherical idea is not only blasphemous but ridiculous, since it involves believing that men can live upsides down.” But as Charles Nowell suggests, the very vigor of his attacks on the spherical concept suggests the frequency with which he met with that view. In any case, he was never “a spokesman for the church, which never made a pronouncement on the matter; Charles E. Nowell, The Great Discoveries and the First Colonial Empires (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University; 1954, 1974), p. 7. He illustrated this with a map found in Cosmos’ only surviving work, Christian Topography (c. 540); also see Peter Barker, ed., The Map Book (New York: Levenger Press-Walker & Co.; c. 2006), pp. 34-35.

<sup>88</sup>

Strabo, “Physical Geography at the Christian Era,” in Richard Garnett, et al., eds., The Book of Literature: A Comprehensive Anthology, 33 vols. (New York: Grollier Society; 1922-1923), v., p. 395.

<sup>89</sup>

Hesiod speaks of the “holy islands” or “Isles of the Blessed” in his “Theogony,” l. 1016, pp. 84-85; Apollodorus in his The Library, 2 vols., trans. Sir James George Frazer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University-Loeb Classical Library; 1961), II, pp. 5, 215, 317; and Plato of the “Fortunate Isles” in his Timaeus; see The Dialogues of Plato, trans. Benjamin Jowett, in Robert Maynard Hutchins, ed., Great Books of the Western World,

peoples and the great heroes of the Greeks. And when the Mediterranean, “the Sea,” was appropriated by the Romans as Mare Nostrum (“Our Sea”), the Ocean River was promoted to become the Mare Oceanus, or the Ocean Sea.<sup>90</sup>

Here someone may object that the idea of Ocean as a single entity of circulating and encircling water is merely an “invention” or “social construction” of the ancients, and so of little descriptive or analytical relevance today. Perhaps, but Carson for one did not agree. “In its broader meaning,” she writes, sounding like a modern Strabo, this

concept of the ancients remains. For the sea lies all about us. The commerce of all lands must cross it. The very winds that move over the lands have been cradled on its broad expanse and seek ever to return to it. The continents themselves dissolve and pass to the sea, in grain after grain of eroded land. So the rains that rose from it return again in rivers. In its mysterious past it encompasses all the dim origins of life and receives in the end, after, it may be, many transmutations, the dead husks of that same life. For all at last return to the sea – to Oceanus, the ocean river, like the ever-flowing stream of time, the beginning and the end.<sup>91</sup>

Less symbolically, the ancient Greeks’ conception was either amazingly intuitive, or a striking coincidence, or both. This is because according to geologists and the now prevailing theory of plate tectonics,<sup>92</sup> at the beginning of the Mesozoic period, some 200

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7: Plato, 54 vols. (Chicago, IL: Encyclopaedia Britannica; 1952), pp. 442-447;

<sup>90</sup>

R.H. Fuson, Legendary Islands of the Ocean Sea, p. xiv.

<sup>91</sup>

R. Carson, The Sea Around Us (2003), p. 259. Another oceanographer highlighted the importance of the oceans for our world by suggesting the planet be renamed in their honour; see P.R. Pinet, Oceanography: An Introduction to the Planet Oceanus (New York: West Publishing; 1992).

<sup>92</sup>

On our understanding of these dynamics see the section “From Continental Drift to Plate Tectonics,” in Colin Tudge, The Time Before History: 5 Million Years of Human Impact (New York: Simon & Schuster-Touchstone Books; 1996, 1997), pp. 41-48.

million years ago, there was once indeed a single ocean (Panthalassia) surrounding a single super continent (Pangea) which contained a single sea (Sea of Tethys). Rifting along this last, the future Mediterranean, some 150 million years ago, led to the formation of two continents – a northern known as Laurasia and a southern we call Gondwana or Gondwanaland – and to the opening of the North Atlantic. Some 130 million years ago a further shift of plates split Gondwana to create the Indian Ocean, while a sea (Sinus Borealis) on Laurasia began widening into the Arctic Ocean. Subsequently, some 95 million years ago, the South Atlantic basin began developing to join with the North Atlantic, which process shrank the remainder of Panthalassa into the Pacific. Consequently, geologists believe that the separation of North America and Eurasia occurred coincidentally with that of South America, Africa and India, followed by Australia and Antarctica, which was the last to separate. By 15 million years ago, the oceans had taken roughly the form they have today and, with over two-thirds of the earth's land mass lying in the Northern Hemisphere, they covered at least 80 percent of the Southern Hemisphere.<sup>93</sup>

Throughout this process the sea levels, and consequently the amount of land exposed

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A map of Pangea is found in D. Palmer, Prehistoric Past Revealed, p.103. The processes underlying the formation of our world, oceans included, are detailed in Ibid., pp. 48-57 and S. Lamb and D. Sington, Earth Story: The Shaping of Our World (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University; 1998). More particularly, see S. Hutchinson and L.E. Hawkins, Oceans, pp. 20-21, 26; E.J. Prager and S.A. Earle, The Oceans, pp. 23-51, 141-161; and Giovanni Pinna, Prehistory (London: Burke Publishing; 1984), pp. 97-101. Michael Viney, Ireland (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books; 2003), pp. 18-21, and John McPhee, Annals of the Former World (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux; 1998, 1999), especially pp. 115-147, 217-232, 554-570, provide more detailed case studies of this process.



above the Ocean, varied continually in accord with the waxing and waning of Earth's major glaciers. The consensus at present accepts a sequence of at least five major Ice Ages, each including numerous glacial advances and contractions, at times lasting tens of thousands of years, and mainly occurring on land masses in the upper or middle latitudes. In brief these are the Huronian Ice Age, largely in North America, from 2500-2100 million years ago; (2) the Stuartian-Varangian Ice Age, in North America, Europe, Africa, Arabia, China and Australia, from 950 to 600 million years ago; (3) the Andean-Saharan, in Arabia, the central Sahara, western Africa and South America's Amazon, some 450 to 420 years past; the Karoo, affecting Africa, South America, Antarctica, Arabia, India, and Australia, from 360 to 620 million years ago; and the finally, the Holarctic-Antarctic Ice Age, which began some 30 million years ago in the Andes, in North America, Eurasia, the Arctic, the Antarctic, and elsewhere.<sup>94</sup> Within this last, over the past two million years alone, there were at least twenty major glaciations bringing "fluctuating sea levels that alternately flooded and exposed vast areas of continental shelf." These brought little alteration to some environments, but in others they entailed "enormous changes that redistributed and probably radically altered the composition of both floral and faunal populations."<sup>95</sup>

### **The Atlantic Unifier: The Gulf Stream**

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P. Couture, Ice: Beauty, Danger, History, pp. 10-12.

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Steve G. Webb, The First Boat People (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 2006), pp. 11-12. He notes that for roughly 80 percent of the last 2 million years, sea levels "were low, probably below -65m" [-215 ft]" the present sea level.

At first glance this might suggest that however united our oceans were in some far distant, prehistoric past, they have since evolved into four quite distinct entities. As already noted, each of the basic four oceans (Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, and Arctic) occupies its own great basin and along with the fifth or Southern, appears to have its own distinct characteristics. But at second glance, they may not be quite as self-contained and individual as at first appears. Here a prime example is the celebrated Gulf Stream, once thought to result from a “fountain” on the ocean floor near Florida<sup>96</sup> and first charted by Benjamin Franklin, along with his whaling cousin Timothy Folger.<sup>97</sup> Just as all students of oceans recognize the significance of the easterly and westerly trade winds and associated surface currents,<sup>98</sup> they are equally unanimous in insisting that the North Atlantic’s character is uniquely shaped by this Gulf Stream, the largest and best known of western boundary currents. Indeed, it is perhaps the best-known feature of the northern Atlantic, in the same manner as the monsoons are an identifying feature for the

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For example, in commenting on the God’s reference to “the springs of the sea” in Job XXXVIII, 16, the British theologian Albert Barnes explained that apart from rivers and streams, “it is known, also, that there are fountains at the bottom of the ocean, and in some places the amount of water that flows from them is so great, that its action is perceptible on the surface. One such fountain,” he adds, “exists in the Atlantic ocean near the coast of Florida;” Barnes’ Notes, 28 vols. in 14, III: Notes on the Old Testament: Job, 2 vols. in one, (London: Blackie and Sons; 1847; reprint: Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books; 2005), ii, p. 200.

<sup>97</sup>

Walter Isaacson, Benjamin Franklin: An American Life (New York: Simon & Schuster; 2003), pp. 129, 290-292, 437.

<sup>98</sup>

On the major currents found throughout the Ocean, see W.A. Sundt, Naval Science 2, pp. 133-136; “Current,” in P. Kemp, Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea (1988), pp.219-222; P. Freuchen with D. Loth, Peter Freuchen’s Book of the Seven Seas, pp. 96-115; and S. Hutchinson and L.E. Hawkins, Oceans, pp. 42-45.

Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia.

Dubbing it “the most famous ocean current in the world,” science writer John Lynch maintains that

the Gulf Stream is precise and wonderous in its complexity. It is a vast ocean river, constantly turned from its path by the Coriolis effect of the spinning Earth, but counterbalanced by a difference in sea-level height of 3 feet (1 meter) from one side to the other, which creates a huge mass of water heaving the other way. It is not one current, but a whole circulatory system within itself, with cold and warm rings and eddies that form spinning away from it, out and back. At the surface of the ocean it has a secondary, gentle current which returns its flow via a pathway further south, from the North Atlantic to the Caribbean . . . And its influence on our climate is legendary.<sup>99</sup>

Originating in the Gulf of Mexico, the flow of this fast-flowing, warm and salty oceanic stream is estimated as being some one billion cubic feet (30 million cu. m) per second as it exits through the Florida Straits. It then flows north along the eastern coast of North America with a width of 30-46 miles (50-75km) at the rate of four miles (6.5k) an hour, and extending to a depth of 1500 feet (450 m). Off Cape Hatteras it begins moving eastwards to collide with the cold Labrador Current off of Newfoundland’s Grand Banks, and so to produce that region’s notorious fogs. Moving into the North Atlantic, this Gulf Stream loses definition and is sometimes renamed the North Atlantic Current or Drift before dividing into two branches in mid-ocean. One of these turns southwards to move past the western coasts of France and Spain, and then becomes the Canaries Current before eventually rejoining the Northern Equatorial Drift. The other branch meanwhile is forced to subdivide into three sub-branches by the cold waters of the

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<sup>99</sup>J. Lynch, The Weather, pp. 112-113.

East Greenland current, which flows south from the Arctic. These sub-branches move (1) west of the British Isles and north along the Norwegian coast and into the Arctic basin; (2) as the Irminger current along the western coast of Iceland; and (3) northward through the Davis Strait into Baffin Bay.<sup>100</sup>

Before turning to the Gulf Stream's significance for the concept of a unified Ocean, two points deserve stress here with regard to this current's impact on any North Atlantic frontier. Firstly, we must remember that the current is in itself a unifying factor within the North Atlantic oceanic region. This is evident in examples of driftwood, plants and varied forms of sea life that are found around the Atlantic rim. Their dispersal by the Gulf Stream was noted over three centuries ago after the discovery of a West Indian sea heart (Entada gigas), a prominent and robust sea bean, was reported from Ireland. With a tough leathery skin, these were used to make snuff boxes and even a baby's tooting ring. Thus this two-inch seed, which falls from a yard-long pod on a forest vine, can easily stay afloat and survive in salt water for the fifteen months needed to drift across the Atlantic. Furthermore, there are perhaps some twenty other tropical plants with peregrine seeds of a similar capability.<sup>101</sup> "It is very easie to conceive," wrote the noted

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The details of the Gulf Stream's formation is discussed in Robert H. Gore, The Gulf of Mexico: A Treasury of Resources in the American Mediterranean (Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press; 1992), pp. 68-74, and J. Lynch, The Weather, pp. 107-111. For more on the regional weather also see James A. Henry, Kenneth M. Portier and Jan Coyne, The Climate and Weather of Florida (Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press; 1994). The currents subsequent course in general is outlined in Lynch, pp. 112-114; E.J. Prager and S.A. Earle, The Oceans, pp.96-100; S. Hutchinson and L.E. Hawkins, Oceans, pp. 46-47; and P. Kemp, Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea (1988), pp. 219-220.

<sup>101</sup>

M. Viney, Ireland, p. 177.

British naturalist and founder of Chelsea Botanical Gardens, Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), “that growing in Jamaica in the woods, they may fall from the Trees into the Rivers, or by any other way [be] conveyed by them into the Sea,” after which a westerly trade wind blew “for at least two parts of three of the Whole Year so that the Beans being brought North by the Currents from the Gulf of Florida, are put into these Westerly Winds way and be supported by this means arrive in Scotland,” and Ireland.<sup>102</sup>

Sloane’s explanation is surprisingly accurate for its day. Of course, we now know much more about currents. This is clear, for example, with regard to the famed Sargasso Sea. As “a place forgotten by the winds, undisturbed by the strong flow of waters that girdle it as with a river,” Rachael Carson observed, it receives no fresh water and only the influx “of saline water from the adjacent currents, especially from the Gulf Stream or North Atlantic Current.” But with “little, inflowing streams of surface water come the plants and animals that for months or years have drifted in the Gulf Stream” after having been torn loose during storms from coastal rocks or reefs of the West Indies and Florida.<sup>103</sup> Again, turtles from the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean migrate into the Atlantic on the Gulf Stream into the Atlantic Current. When this divides, the majority follow the southern branch, but a few unfortunates are carried north to be stranded on the coasts of the British Isles and northwest European mainland.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>

Quoted from Sir Hans Sloane’s Philosophical Transactions, in Ibid.

<sup>103</sup>

R. Carson, The Sea Around Us (2003), p. 35.

<sup>104</sup>

S. Hutchinson and L.E. Hawkins, Oceans, p. 47; M. Viney, Ireland, pp. 179-180.

Other evidence of such phenomena are very old indeed. British archaeologist Francis Pryor tells of a spear-shaped piece of wood, found with "the debris of its manufacture" at a waterlogged level, dated at 100 BC, of an Iron-Age site at Dun Vulan on South Uist in the Outer Hebrides. This was identified as being Larix laricina (Tamarack or American Larch), native to Northeastern North America, but it had been attacked by warm-water ship worms. Archaeologists eventually recreated its history as follows: "The tree had grown in north-eastern Canada, had fallen into a river and been carried to the sea at Labrador, thence to the warm waters of the Caribbean, where it was attacked by ship worm." It then "floated into the Gulf Stream and eventually arrived at Dun Vulan, where timber was in very short supply, and every piece of driftwood was gratefully received."<sup>105</sup>

Secondly, the "legendary" impact of this current on the weather of the North Atlantic rim deserves attention. It is easily observable that throughout the Gulf Stream's journey, all the coasts it washes enjoy temperate climates.<sup>106</sup> Where it collides with colder Arctic waters such as the Labrador and Greenland currents, fogs and wet weather are common. More importantly, when the colder water from the Arctic meets the warmer, dense and more salty water of the Gulf Stream, the latter's surface water cools, increases in saline

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<sup>105</sup>

Francis Pryor, Seahenge: A Quest for Life and Death in Bronze Age Britain (London: HarperCollins; 2001, 2002), p. 245.

<sup>106</sup>

P. Kemp, Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea (1988), p. 220, who notes that in the Pacific, the similar but less pronounced North Equatorial Current preforms a similar role to the Gulf Stream. For a fuller discussion of this current, its southern counterpart, the Pacific's other currents, climate, and so on, see T.K. Belashchenko, ed., U kartu Tikhogo okeana [At the Map of the Pacific Ocean] (Moscow: Voenizdat.; 1970), pp. 17-27.

content, becomes heavier or denser, and then plunges downward in slowly revolving, vertical “pipes” in the Labrador and Greenland Seas, to form the so-called “North Atlantic Deep Water.” This “down-welling” draws in still more warmer water to replace that cooled, and so pushes the North Atlantic Current, which is still warm, east and northward. There the resulting atmospheric conditions off of Iceland, in their turn, “have an important bearing on temperature and rainfall throughout northwestern Europe” and keep it several degrees warmer than regions at similar latitudes elsewhere.<sup>107</sup>

Taken with other factors, these currents also help produce what Lynch calls “the wild Atlantic.” He terms it such, he explains, because the “North Atlantic remains one of the wildest regions of meteorological activity on the planet and, despite the extraordinary advances measurement and computing ..., it continues to surprise and defy the skills of forecasters....” Symbolically, this is suggested by the fact that at present they are applying principles from Chaos Theory to their work, but mariners today as yesterday face a bewildering mix of conditions that run the gamut from total calms with fogs, sudden and unpredictable rogue waves and hurricanes.<sup>108</sup> In addition, we must remember that even small changes in the oceanic temperatures can bring major changes in weather and climate. During the some five centuries of the “Great Warming” in Europe, roughly from the 900s to the 1300s AD, for instance, a persistent overall temperature rise of only a few degrees “caused significant sea level rises” of 21 to 31 inches (60 to 80cm) in the

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<sup>107</sup>B.M. Fagan, The Little Ice Age, p.9; M. de Villiers, Windswept, pp. 96-97.<sup>108</sup>J. Lynch, The Weather, pp. 114-115.

North Sea,” and this increase altered the configuration of low-lying coasts.” As a result, Brian Fagan tells us, after the year 1000 in

Great Britain, a tidal inlet extended as far inland as Norwich. In William the Conqueror’s time, the town of Beccles, now far from the North Sea, was a thriving herring port. Before the Conquest [of 1066], local fishers had supplied thirty thousand herring annually to the nearby abbey of St. Edmund. William doubled the assessment. Great storms in 1251 and 1287 inundated huge tracts of the Netherlands to form a huge inland water, the Zuider Zee, as thousands of acres of coastal Denmark and Germany also vanished beneath the ocean.<sup>109</sup>

This must be a matter of some interest in light of our present concerns of “global warming” and “climate change,” and to the ongoing debate over the extent to which it strengthens the power of hurricanes and typhoons.<sup>110</sup> Speaking of Iceland, Fagan also observes that at present, the edge of the pack ice in normal years lies from 56 to 62 miles (80 to 100 km) off the island’s northwest corner, in mild years 125 to 153 miles (200 to 240 km), but that in exceptionally cold years, the pack ice will reach the north coast, and even cover the eastern down to the southern shore. According to a report of Irish monks from c. 825, this was roughly the position of the pack at that time as well. Yet we are told that during the great cold spell of 1350 to 1380, the ice was close enough for Greenland polar bears to come ashore on Iceland. This was, of course, during the first century of the so-called “Little Ice Age” (c. 1300-c. 1850), the initial phase of which was

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<sup>109</sup>

Brian M. Fagan, The Great Warming: Climate Change and the Rise and Fall of Civilizations (New York: Bloomsbury Press; 2008), pp. 14-15.

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This debate is briefly outlined in Peter Phillips and Andrew Roth, with Project Censored, eds., Censored 2008: The Top 25 Censored Stories [of 2006-07] (New York and London: Seven Stories Press; 2008), pp. 274-275.



marked by crop failures, famines, epidemics, and and the social unrest that in England culminated in the Great Peasant Uprising of 1381.<sup>111</sup>

Furthermore, given that the Little Ice Age of the 1300s resulted from a decline of no more than three to four degrees Centigrade in temperature, it is clear that major changes in this mechanism of oceanic circulation can have a variety of “profound impacts” on our climate,<sup>112</sup> impacts that may soon be with us. “More frequent storms, storm surges, coastal flooding and erosion, flooding of lakes and rivers, more snow and ice storms, increased precipitation but not necessarily when it is needed, dry summers, falling water tables, and other weather-related anomalies,” warned one environmental group in 2003, are likely to be the symptoms of climate change in the Atlantic regions” of Canada.<sup>113</sup> Another apparent aspect of the present trend in “global warming” is the obvious rapid meltdown of the Arctic icecap. “In 100 years we will no longer have a white Arctic Ocean,” warned a British climate specialist in autumn 2005. “It will have turned blue because all its ice will have melted.... The question is: will it happen in a few years, or in several decades?”<sup>114</sup> And in fact, between 2004 and 2005 alone, the Arctic lost 14

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B.M. Fagan, Little Ice Age, pp. 9, 28-44.

112

Ibid.

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Canadian Climate Impacts and Adaptation Research Network (C-CIARN Atlantic), “Climate Change Adaptation in Atlantic Canada: Communities, Municipalities, Infrastructure, Transformation. Executive Summary of the Proceedings of C-CIARN Atlantic’s Third Regional Workshop, Charlottetown, P.E.I., June 11-13, 2003,” p. 1.

114

Duncan Wingham as quoted in Robin McKie, “Climate Probe Plunges into Arctic Ocean,” The Guardian Weekly, 173 (14-20 October 2005), No. 17, p. 15; also see K.

percent of its dense and thick perennial ice, the amount of which has declined by 41 percent in the last twenty-three years. Not all foresee disaster, however, and the more optimistic point out that Greenland is experiencing a farming boom, as once-barren soil now yields broccoli, hay, and potatoes.” Elsewhere, temperate forests are replacing the tundra, new fish are migrating into newly warmed northern waters, and speculators eagerly await easier access to timber, minerals and the predicted vast reserves of fresh water. All this has led some to talk of the opening of new economic frontiers in the Arctic region, which with its treasure-chest of resources is already becoming a contested political-military borderland as well.<sup>115</sup>

Others, however, express still more serious concerns with regard to the possible natural impact of these changes. They fear that the resulting increase of cold fresh water from melting ice in the Arctic may well “alter or, worse, stop, the Gulf Stream, at least for a period.” In reality, there are already signs that this process is under way and that the down-welling of colder water is already slowing. Thus, for example, the above-mentioned identified or “known vertical ‘pipes’ have been reduced in number in the last few years from about a dozen to two, in part because the water is too warm to sink.” Marq de Villiers reports that all the computer models therefore demonstrate “that global warming would have a perverse short-term cooling effect on some northern places,” and

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Dow and T.E. Downing, The Atlas of Climate Change, pp. 22-24.

115

Scott G. Borgerson, “Arctic Meltdown: The Economic and Security Implications of Global Warming,” Foreign Affairs, 87 (March-April 2008), No. 2, pp. 63-77. He presents photographs of the Arctic icecap in September of 2001 and 2007, which show a significant shrinkage.

that the Ireland, the British Isles, Maritime Canada, and northern New England “would go into a temporary deep freeze.” Equally disturbing, he adds that there is considerable evidence “that changes in the velocity and direction of the conveyor belt might be a prime cause of the peculiar fact that hurricanes seem to wax and wane on a more or less thirty-year cycle.” For while it may just coincidental, when the oceanic conveyor slowed and the North Atlantic cooled slightly in the 1960s, the number of hurricanes fell, but when the conveyor again began speeding up during the 1990s, the frequency of hurricanes did likewise, and experts at Miami’s National Hurricane Center suspect “that the coming quarter century will produce more, and more intense, storms.”<sup>116</sup>

This well may understate the possible impact of such a climatic “event,” which might result in a still more severe and prolonged chill, such as that occurring during the period known as the Younger Dryas (c. 11,500 to 10,600 BC). The consequences of the latter can only be imagined. The sudden drop in temperatures at that time apparently did result from the insulation of the warm Gulf Stream by an excess of cold fresh water from melting Arctic glaciers. This then ended the cooling and down-welling of Gulf Stream, which in turn ended the push of the Atlantic Current toward Western Europe and deprived that region of the beneficial impact of its warmer surface waters. As a consequence, “in a decade or less,” the earth plunged “from temperatures similar to

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M. de Villiers, Windswept, pp. 97-98; hurricanes and other warning signs are discussed and illustrated as well in K. Dow and T.E. Downing, The Atlas of Climate Change, pp. 20-21.

today's into an ice age."<sup>117</sup> Brian Fagan refers to this as a “flip’ of the switch” in the “ocean conveyor” which, in the past, has “changed ocean circulation profoundly” and “caused the entire ocean-atmosphere system to flip suddenly from one mode during glacial episodes to an entirely different one during warmer periods.” At present, this is precisely what some experts fear may happen as one result of continued unchecked global warming.<sup>118</sup>

### **The Oceanic Unifier: The “Great Ocean Conveyor”**

However worrying this may be, it is not our central concern here. The same of the Atlantic’s currents and weather, however essential they may be to any understanding of this sector of my more extensive oceanic frontier. Rather, the larger significance of the Gulf Stream and North Atlantic Current (or Drift), and of their role as conveyors of warm water within this region, is that it is only one “essential part of the global circulation of the deep-water ocean.” Only recently identified (since the early 1980s), this now is known variously as the “Great Ocean Conveyor,” the “Ocean Conveyor

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<sup>117</sup>

G. Ochoa, *et al.*, Climate, p. 26.

<sup>118</sup>

Ibid., p. 118, 123-129; B.M. Fagan, The Long Summer, pp. 61-63, 88-91 (quotes, p. 63); B.M. Fagan, Little Ice Age, pp. 23-28, 47-59; E.J. Prager and S.A. Earle, The Oceans, pp. 130-135. Fagan draws heavily on Wallace S. Broecker, “What Drives Climatic Cycles?” Scientific American, 277 (January 1990), No. 1, 49-56, and George Philander, Is the Temperature Rising? (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University; 1998). In the long run this may be a greater danger to our civilization than short-term hotter climates in northern regions and rising sea levels; see D. Palmer, Prehistoric Past Revealed, pp. 30-44. A recent review of these issues is provided by William F. Ruddiman, “How Did Humans First Alter Human Climate?” Scientific American, 292 (March 2005), No. 3, pp. 46-53.

Belt,” or the “Thermohaline Conveyor.”<sup>119</sup> For our purposes, its significance is that it unifies the world’s three main oceans (Atlantic, Pacific and Indian), and demonstrates that at least in this very vital way, they are merely parts or sectors of the one great Ocean.

Basically, this conveyor is a giant continuous loop or, rather, series of connected large loops of slow-moving water that mix warm surface currents and colder deep currents to form a thermohaline current system that “is vital to life in the very deep ocean since it carries oxygen down from the surface layers.” Up to one billion cubic feet (30 million cu m) of surface water enter it every second, after which it may take as long as 1000 years to complete the whole circulation. This process is powered largely by differences in density that are produced by saline levels, and/or changes in temperature.<sup>120</sup> In discussing the Gulf Stream and North Atlantic Current we have already traced one surface current-section of the conveyer which demonstrates that process. Here we need only add that “North Atlantic Deep Water” formed by the downwelling off of Greenland fills most of the Atlantic Basin with cold, dense, salty water at an extraordinary depth.<sup>121</sup>

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119

J. Lynch, The Weather, pp. 113, 105; M. de Villiers, Windswept, pp. 96-97; K. Dow and T.E. Downing, The Atlas of Climate Change, p. 33.

120

S. Hutchinson and L.E. Hawkins, Oceans, pp. 44, 295. As J. Lynch, The Weather, p. 105, puts it, a drop of water from the Bangladsh monsoon rains and flooding enters the conveyer to begin “one of the longest and most exciting journeys possible, traveling even through time to the other side of the globe. For the water is re-entering the ocean and setting forth into a newly discovered and mysterious world of motion, part of the one-thousand-year voyage which will end with it raining down again in Europe.”

121

Ibid., p. 106. Apart from Lynch, whose account I follow here, a detailed portrayal of this conveyor system is provided by Wallace S. Broecker, “Chaotic Climate,” Scientific

This same cold water also creates a deep ocean current that begins “a long, sluggish journey south through the cold darkness of the world's ocean depths until it reaches the other side of the globe.” The journey itself, Lynch continues, is far from straightforward.

Rather,

it is like a set of pools in a fountain, where the water enters, travels round and round for some time and then flows down to the next level. So the water in the deep-ocean circulation moves round and round in a series of what are called ‘gyres’ – rotating pools perhaps the width of a sea -- with water quietly remaining in once such pool for years before slipping out and entering the next one. The path the deep water takes, driven by ever-so-light changes in temperature and salinity, sweeps back across the Atlantic at a depth of 3,000 feet (1,000 meters) and below, slowly heaving across towards South America....<sup>122</sup>

A few hundred years later, having reached the vicinity of the seas off of northern Brazil, our deep water current eventually turns south to meet “the cold waters descending off the Antarctic coast. This creates the “Atlantic Bottom Water” – the other great source of sinking water that drives the conveyor.”<sup>123</sup>

At this point the Atlantic Bottom Water splits as one branch passes on to circle Antarctica and then cross south of Australia. After another couple of hundred years there, it flows into the northern Pacific, and then becomes surface currents that travel back through the Indonesian archipelago into the Indian Ocean. The second branch,

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American, 282 (November 1995), No. 11, pp. 62-68. For a discussion of the differing dynamics of the movements of surface, intermediate and deep-water currents, which involve up to 90% of the ocean's volume, see E.J. Prager and S.A. Earle, The Oceans, pp. 91-96.

<sup>122</sup>

J. Lynch, The Weather, pp. 106-107.

<sup>123</sup>

Ibid., p. 107.

meanwhile, has headed north and east to slide up the African coast. There it spends over a century slowly warming before surfacing in the Indian Ocean “to become part of the vast evaporation of moist air that creates the rains of the monsoon.” Consequently, by summer’s end much of the water taken from the conveyor will flow down Bangladesh’s rivers to rejoin the Indian Ocean as part of its more swiftly moving (than the deep current) currents of surface water. These then move south to join the surface currents from the first branch that are arriving from the Indonesian archipelago. Thus reunited, these “giant streams of water” take a mere few decades to journey westward, round Africa’s Cape of Good Hope and, after “lingering for years at a time in spiraling eddies and gyres,” end up back in the Caribbean. There they again linger in the complex waters of that Sea and the Gulf of Mexico before eventually rejoining the Gulf Stream to sweep “at an extraordinary speed back up towards the northern Atlantic” to start the conveyor’s journey once again.<sup>124</sup>

Clearly, then, from the point of view of oceanographers and oceanic geographers, the five recognized oceans comprise one large water world. This includes within itself all the great salt-water seas, with the exception of Central Asia’s Caspian and Aral, and the Salton Sea in California, and it interacts with a similarly interconnected global system of oscillations of winds and weather.<sup>125</sup> If it often may not be necessary to stress this fact, historians of the Atlantic or other particular seas and oceans should keep in mind that

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<sup>124</sup>

Ibid. Also see B.M. Fagan, Little Ice Age, pp. 56-57, and E.J. Prager and S.A. Earle, The Oceans, pp. 94-96.

<sup>125</sup>

S. Hutchinson and L.E. Hawkins, Oceans, p. 26.

their protagonists often work within a similar context, and not forget that they are engaged only in regional studies of a much larger whole in much the same way as are students of New England or Canada's Atlantic Provinces. For like their individual ocean's dominant currents, studies confined to the Atlantic, Pacific or Indian oceans are essentially regional. This is not to say that they do not have undoubted value in themselves just like the other regional studies mentioned. Nonetheless, the developments they examine often may be fully comprehensible only within the context of the larger whole – be it the British or French empires, the Canadian or American federations, a larger Atlantic community, or an oceanic frontier and community that encircles the globe.

In this regard, it is worth noting that the “invented” concept of “Atlantic history” is a modern “construct,” and one that might well have made little sense to earlier inhabitants of that ocean's maritime communities. This is because for many living around its rim, the Atlantic was not merely a means of communicating with West Africa or the eastern coasts of the America's, but it was a forecourt that provided entry to a larger Oceanic World. Thus Iberian, French, English and other European mariners did indeed set sail in Atlantic waters for the Americas, but their next voyages might take them on to the fabled East Indies, the Far East or Peru. Later, the same Atlantic carried Dutch settlers bound for South Africa as well as New Amsterdam, and British convicts to Australia in the same way as it had served Spain's conquistadores and Plymouth's Pilgrim Fathers. Again, once America's eastern seaboard had been settled, the Atlantic continued to fulfill this role for those Caribbean pirates who established a base on Africa's east coast



and then operated in the Indian Ocean, for the Yankee whalers and sealers who sailed to the Pacific, for the tea clippers which traded in China, and for the American miners from the East Coast miners who took ships first to California, and then to Australia, during the Gold Rushes of the mid-1800s. Indeed, much of the Atlantic's prominence among its oceanic fellows comes precisely from its monopoly of the role of European forecourt until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Even so, this same prominence also rests on the self-evident fact that the Atlantic, historically and otherwise, is part of the one big Ocean, and the history of its role as a maritime frontier cannot be understood fully without reference to the nature and characteristics of this larger expanse and its varied environments. For to understand that Ocean, "to learn how to survive on it, to know how to move on it propulsively, and eventually to penetrate the long blue horizons that demarcated the two-thirds of the face of the globe," is basic to understanding "the rise and progress of mankind,"<sup>126</sup> and possibly our ultimate failure as well.

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126

Noel Mostert. The Line upon a Wind: An Intimate History of the Last and Greatest War Fought at Sea under Sail, 1793-1815 (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007), p. 3..

**CHAPTER V:  
DEFINING THE OCEANIC "FRONTIER"**

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean -- roll!  
Ten thousand fleets sweep over you in vain;  
Man marks the earth with ruin; his control  
Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain  
The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain  
A shadow of man's ravage, like a drop of rain,  
He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,  
Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd and unknown.

His steps are not upon thy paths -- thy fields  
Are not a spoil for him -- thou dost arise  
And shake him from thee; the vile strength he wields  
For earth's destruction thou dost all despise,  
Spurning him from thy bosom to the skies,  
And sendst him, shivering in thy playful spray,  
And howling, to his Gods, where haply lies  
His petty hope in some near port or bay,  
And dashet him again to earth -- there let him lay.

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls  
Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake,  
And monarchs tremble in their capitals,  
The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make  
Their clay creator the vain title take  
Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war: --  
These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake,  
They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar  
Alike the Armada's pride, or spoils of Trafalgar.

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee --  
 Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they?  
 Thy waters washed them power while they were free,  
 And many a tyrant since: their shores obey  
 The stranger, slave or savage; their decay  
 Has dried up realms to deserts: -- not so thou,  
 Unchangeable save to thy wild waves' play --  
 Time writes no wrinkle on thy azure brow --  
 Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

Thou glorious mirror, where the Almighty's form  
 Glasses itself in tempests: in all time,  
 Calm or convulsed -- in breeze, or gale, or storm,  
 Icing the pole, or in the torrid clime  
 Dark-heaving; boundless, endless, and sublime --  
 The image of Eternity -- the throne  
 Of the Invisible; even from out thy slime  
 The monsters of the deep are made; each zone  
 Obeys thee; thou goest forth, dread, fathomless, alone.

---- George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824), "By the Deep Sea," [or "Ocean"],  
 extract from Childe Harold's Pilgrimage, in John Hayward, ed., The Oxford Book of  
 Nineteenth-Century English Verse (Oxford: Oxford University; 1964), pp. 249-250.

As Lord Byron's dramatic lines makes clear, the "watery plain" of Ocean hardly seems a suitable venue for the Turner-type of "frontier." This is true even if the concept is amended as suggested by many of the theorists and scholars discussed in Part I above. Yet we also saw that Turner himself accepted that a parallel of his "frontier" – defined as "state of mind" – existed between the Westward Movement in the United States and the Greek colonization of the Western Mediterranean in the Archaic period (c. 800-500 BC).<sup>1</sup> Others followed suit with one American historian terming the Phoenician settlement at Carthage, as well as numerous Greek colonies elsewhere in that part of the Mediterranean, as "the Western Frontier of Ancient Civilization."<sup>2</sup> Fernand Braudel agrees that the West Mediterranean was indeed "a Far West," but somewhat strangely credits Rome, rather than its Greek predecessors, with its creation "by founding cities, ...[that] partially established a civilization ...which, if not always exactly Roman, was at least an imitation of the original." Subsequently, he argues, Rome's continued expansion

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Frederick Jackson Turner, "Problems in American History" [1894], in his The Early Writings of Frederick Jackson Turner (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin; 1938), p. 83.

2

Lynn Thorndike, A Short History of Civilization (New York: F.S. Crofts; 1926, 1930), p. 164. On these colonies see Serge Lancel, Carthage: A History, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell; 1992), chaps. 1-4, and John Boardman, The Greeks Overseas (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books; 1964), pp. 175-231. Rather oddly, one recent study of the ancient Mediterranean virtually ignores this aspect of its history, mentions Phoenician colonies only in passing, and devotes a single, six-line paragraph to those of the Greeks; see Robin W. Winks and Susan P. Mattern-Parkes, The Ancient Mediterranean World: From the Stone Age to A.D. 600 (Oxford: Oxford University; 2004), pp. 35, 59. The same study's index has a total of five entries on the Athenian navy, one each on those of Minoan Crete, Carthage and Rome, two on piracy, and none on ships, ship-building or shipping. It is hard to find a better example of disregard of many historians for the nautical dimension of their subjects of study.

in the West ended with “the extensive ‘ocean frontier’ [running] from Denmark to Gibraltar,” which a long time remained “peaceful and secure.”<sup>3</sup>

Apart from this last comment, which treats Europe’s west coast as one of Rome’s fixed border-frontiers or limes, these authors’ use of the terms “the West” and “frontier” are primarily metaphorical. Interestingly enough, neither regards the conquest of the Atlantic almost two millennia later in the same light. In part this apparently reflects the vastly greater distances involved (as compared to the Mediterranean), and the fact that despite stubbornly held beliefs in the existence of numerous mythical islands, in the event only a handful were found along the way. For unlike the Pacific, the Atlantic lacks extensive island archipelagos. This means that once Iceland, the Azores, Maderia and the Canaries had been explored, conquered and, where suitable, colonized, any expanding “settlement frontier” closed abruptly.<sup>4</sup> Attempts in this direction only resumed after the

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Fernand Braudel, A History of Civilizations, trans. Richard Mayne (London: Allen Lane/Penguin Press; 1994), pp. 307-308.

4

See David Abulafia, The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 2008), pp. 31-101; Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, The Canary Islands after the Conquest: The Making of a Colonial Society in the Early Sixteenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), and Thomas Bentley Duncan, Atlantic Islands: Madeira, the Azores, and the Cape Verdes in Seventeenth-Century Commerce and Navigation (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago; 1972). As Fernandez-Armesto points out, further progress in both exploration and extending any settlement frontier was then blocked for the moment by the need to solve the riddle of the mid-Atlantic’s winds and currents; see his Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration (Toronto, Ont.: Viking-Penguin Canada; 2006), pp. 122-151. The search for other, mythical islands is chronicled W.H. Babcock, Legendary Islands of the Atlantic (New York: National Geographic Society; 1922). More recent studies include Donald S. Johnson, Phantom Islands of the Atlantic (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane; 1994) and Robert H. Fuson, Legendary Islands of the Ocean Sea (Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press; 1995).

Spaniards reached the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, and then settlement was initially only one minor theme in the mix of European motives.<sup>5</sup> So while the era of “discovery” and first European settlement may be recognized as heroic in its own way, historians of the United States almost invariably begin using the term “frontier” only after the first colonies have gained a foothold and begin their attempts to expand into the adjacent interior.<sup>6</sup> Or put differently, the “frontier” begins with the arrival of settlers in America, not with the departure of expeditions bringing them here – a fact that speaks volumes about the interpretative links between Turner’s frontier, the subsequent Westward Movement, and the overall American experience.<sup>7</sup>

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Typical of the range of treatments on these early European efforts are Kenneth R. Andrews, Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1984), especially chapters 6-10, 12-13; John E. Elliott, The Old World and the New, 1492-1650 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1970, 1992); and Carl Oerwin Sauer, Sixteenth Century North America: The Land and the People as Seen by the Europeans (Berkeley, CA: University of California; 1971); On the Caribbean in particular, see Kirkpatrick Sale, The Conquest of Paradise: Christopher Columbus and the Columbian Legacy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 1990); Arthur Percival Newton, The European Nations in the West Indies, 1493-1688 (London: A. and C. Black; 1933); and Jan Rogozinski, A Brief History of the Caribbean: From the Arawak and Carib to the Present, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin-Plume; 2000), pp. 9-84.

6

See the discussion in chapter 1 above.

7

See, for example, R.V. Coleman, The First Frontier: A History of How America Began (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons; 1948), and Louis B. Wright, The Atlantic Frontier: Colonial American Civilization [1607-1763] (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University; 1959, 1970). Major exceptions are W. Prescott Webb and Bernard Bailyn who, as pointed out below, view the Atlantic crossing as an essential component of the process of creating an actual settlement frontier, and the extent to which America as a European “frontier” is discussed more generally in J.H. Elliott, The Old World and the New, especially chapter 3.

### Coasts as Military Frontiers

From a more prosaic standpoint as well it may seem as inappropriate to apply the concept of the traditional European-style “frontier-as-border-line,” fortified or otherwise, as it is Turner’s theories, to maritime milieus. But on closer examination, matters in this regard are not as straight-forward as first appears. To begin with, Braudel’s reference to the Roman empire’s “ocean frontier” suggests, sea coasts as such also were regarded as the most natural of possible “natural frontiers.” Traditionally these last, which usually comprise a distinct geographical feature (mountain ranges, rivers, and so on) are distinguished from “artificial frontiers” -- the demarcated, imaginary boundary lines that pass through a landscape to mark a border or frontier between two states. While this distinction seems logical enough, again the issue is not quite this simple. For in fact all such borders are artificial inasmuch as their precise details are fixed in accord with treaties and conventions between the states involved. With regard to coast, as Lucien Febvre points out, the precise position of the state frontier running along shoreline was long a matter of debate. “Some say,” he wrote in the 1920s, “that it is within a cannon shot. Others say that it is three, four or six nautical miles of 1,852 feet each [from 5.56-11.12 km] out from the coast.” As a result, he continues, a “seashore frontier in any case has nothing geographical about it” and like all other types of frontiers is, in fact, a convention.”<sup>8</sup>

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Lucien Febvre, “Frontière: The Word and the Concept,” in Peter Burke, ed., A New Kind of History in the Writings of Le Febvre (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1973), pp. 214-215. But be it a “convention” or otherwise in terms of international practice, the laws of individual states pertaining to coastlines developed early and in considerable

Furthermore, although the “cannon-shot” definition was once fairly common, it too proved unreliable thanks to the varying and increasing ranges of both ship-board and coastal artillery. For example, whereas a British smooth-bore 8-inch coastal gun of c. 1860 had a range of 2200 yards (2012 m), its rifled, 9.2-inch equivalent of c. 1910 was effective up to some 8000 yards (7315 m).<sup>9</sup> As for sailors themselves, although they normally used the term “frontier” in the classical sense of “limits or borders of a country,”<sup>10</sup> British naval doctrine also sometimes conceived of a “maritime frontier” as the equivalent of the “military frontier” proper. Often defined in the age of sail as “the enemy coast,” which was to be interdicted by the Royal Navy’s close blockade, this concept was “eclipsed” by the introduction of more powerful shore defences, better armed coastal-defence boats, the development of mines and torpedoes, screw-propelled

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complexity. In the case of Great Britain, for instance, this is illustrated by Stuart A. Moore’s 984-page study, A History of the Foreshore and the Law Relating Thereto, with a Hitherto Unpublished Treatise by Lord Hale, Lord Hale’s “De Jure Maris,” and Hall’s Essay on the Rights of the Crown on the Sea-shore, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. with Notes and an Appendix Relating to Fisheries (London: Stevens and Haynes; 1888).

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Roger F. Sarty, Coastal Artillery, 1815-1914 (Alexandria Bay, NY: Museum Restoration Service; 1988), ordnance tables, pp. 43, 45. The parallel development of ship-board guns is detailed Ian Hogg and John Batchelor, Naval Gun (Poole, Dorset: Blandford Press; 1978).

10

Admiral William Henry Smyth, The Sailor’s Word-Book: An Alphabetical Digest of Nautical Words, Including Some More Especially Military, But Useful to Seamen; as well as Archaisms of Former Voyages, revised Vice Admiral Sir E. Belcher (London, Glasgow and Edinburgh: Blackie and Son; 1867; facsimile reprint: Almonte, Ont.: Algrove Publishing; 2004), p. 325.



ironclads and, finally, the submarine.<sup>11</sup> Such developments indicate the extent to which seaboard states long regarded their coasts as de facto military frontiers, and had organized them accordingly. Given the more developed and diversified networks of land-based communications in Europe, states there usually fortified only their large and strategic commercial harbours and naval bases. They otherwise depended on mobile detachments of their standing armies, moving by the established road systems, to defend smaller ports and less heavily inhabited stretches of long sea coasts, the blockade of which remained difficult even after the introduction of steam-driven “ironclad”

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J.S. Bromley, “In the Shadow of Impressment: Friends of a Naval Militia, 1844-74,” in M.R.D. Foot, ed., War and Society: Historical Essays in Honour of J.R. Western, 1928-1971 (London: Paul Elek; 1973), p. 184. The legal issues concerning “close blockades” and changing technology are discussed in Byran Ranft, “Restraints on War at Sea before 1945,” in Michael Howard, ed., Restraints on War: Studies in the Limitation of Armed Conflict (Oxford: Oxford University; 1979), pp. 39-56, and John B. Hattendorf, “Maritime Conflict,” in Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos and Mark R. Shulman, eds., The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare in the Western World (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1994), pp. 98-115. More generally, also see A.J. Marder, British Naval Policy, 1880-1905 (London: Oxford University; 1940), chapter 5, and Donald M. Schurman, The Education of a Navy: The Development of British Naval Strategic Thought, 1867-1914 (London: Cassell; 1965), chapter 1. The changing balance between coastal defenders and blockading forces was discussed at length by the American theorist Admiral A.T. Mahan in 1911; see Mahan on Naval Strategy: Selections from the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, intro. and ed. John B. Hattendorf (Annapolis, MD: US Naval Institute; 1991), pp. 120-131. Nonetheless, the Royal Navy still attempted close operations in 1914, and had the associated dangers thrust home with the simultaneous sinking of the cruisers Aboukir, Cressy and Hogue by the German submarine U-9 on 22 September 1914; David D. Lewis, The Fight for the Sea: The Past, Present, and Future of Submarine Warfare in the Atlantic (New York: Collier Books; 1961), pp. 18-22. The use of mines in coastal defenses before 1914 is recounted in (Capt.) J.S. Cowie, Mines, Minelayers and Minelaying (London: Oxford University; 1949, 1951), pp. 7-42, and Maurice Griffiths, The Hidden Menace (Greenwich, UK: Conway Maritime Press; 1981), pp. 26-51.

warships.<sup>12</sup>

Matters were somewhat different in colonial North America. There a range of Europeans – English, French, Danes, Swedes, Dutch, and Spaniards – had sought to plant colonies at selected sites in some of the numerous sheltered inlets, bays and river mouths that indented the long Atlantic coastline. Apart from attacks by hostile natives on land, these isolated outposts were vulnerable to devastating attacks by seaborne raiders, as evidenced by the destruction of France's Huguenot settlement in La Florida in 1564, the Acadian outpost of Port Royal in 1613 and Quebec in 1629. As a result, all European settlers had from the first hastily erected primitive stockades and/or earthworks that faced outward towards an oceanic frontier that served as a highway for approaching enemies as well as a link to their distant homes. While over time some early defensive positions became major, permanent citadels – for example, St. Augustine's Castillo de San Marcos, Boston's Castle William or Cape Breton's Fortress Louisbourg – most

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Emanuel Raymond Lewis, Seacoast Fortifications of the United States: An Introductory History (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing; 1970, 1990), pp. 14, and on the problems of blockades even with ironclads, Brig.-Gen. G.G. Aston, Lectures on Amphibious Wars (London: John Murray; 1911), pp. 5-6, 181-182. The development of England's coastal defence system can be traced through the numerous references in Norman Longmate's Defending the Island: From Caesar to the Armada and Island Fortress: The Defence of Great Britain, 1603-1945 (London: Hutchinson; 1989 and 1991). Those of the Solent and the Portsmouth naval base are outlined in the series of "Solent Papers," of which Nos. 3, 5 and 6 are especially helpful; see (3) Gary Mitchell and Peter Cobb, Fort Nelson and the Portsdown Forts (Wickham, Kent: G.H. Mitchell; 1987); (5) David Moore, Fort Gilkicker and (6) David Moore, Fort Brockhurst and the Gomer-Elson Forts (Gosport, Hants.: David Moore; 1988 and 1990). Changes in warship design and technology during this crucial period are detailed in Andrew Lambert and Basil Greenhill, eds., Steam, Steel and Shellfire: The Steam Warship, 1815-1905 (London: Conway Maritime Press; 1992).

coastal forts were smaller and usually ignored in periods of peace, only to be rapidly rebuilt, rearmed and reoccupied when hostilities threatened. Given Great Britain's naval power, it is hardly surprising that the rebelling colonists refurbished or many new coastal works during the Revolutionary War, or that with the coming of peace in 1783, the newly independent states once again lost interest in maintaining them.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, by the early 1790s only three of the earlier American coastal forts (Castle Island at Boston, Mud Island at Philadelphia, and Goat Island at Newport) were considered worth resurrecting as part of the creation of the Americans' "First System" of coastal fortifications. Approved by Congress in March 1794, this supplemented a program of fortress building that already was underway in the interior to consolidate the new Republic's hold on the Northwest Territory. These coastal defences, too, were provoked largely by the possibility of a new war with Britain, and the program initially brought the construction of a series of harbour forts, for the most part open works with earth parapets mounting some eight to twelve guns, along with six naval frigates. Although these soon again began to decay, in 1798 friction with France provoked additional funding and the construction of more permanent installations, of which the most celebrated is Baltimore's Fort McHenry. Another round of construction, which

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See, for example, the comments on the coastal fortifications of Virginia and Massachusetts in chapter 1 above, as well as E.R. Lewis, Seacoast Fortifications, pp. 14-18. J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America: The Forts that Defended America, 1600 to the Present (Cambridge, MA: Perseus-Da Capo; 2004), pp. 97-113, 121-129; Ian Barnes with Charles Royster, The Historical Atlas of the American Revolution (New York: Routledge; 2000), pp. 68-69; 106-107; 120-127. Robert S. Browning, III, "Fortifications," in John Whiteclay Chambers, II, The Oxford Companion to Military History (Oxford and New York: Oxford University; 1999), p. 275.

became known as the “Second System,” followed when tensions with Britain again mounted after 1807. This was well advanced when hostilities broke out in 1812 and during these latter, many of the individual coastal forts saw action during the Royal Navy’s blockade and raids along the long American coastline from Maine to New Orleans.<sup>14</sup>

With peace restored, in April 1816 Congress established a Board of Engineers for Fortifications to survey “the frontiers of the United States.” In February 1821 its members announced that they had completed their study of “the three most important sections of the maritime boundaries ... both as to the attack and as to the defence of the frontier.” Their work, they continued, demonstrated “the importance of establishing a complete system for the protection of the frontiers, and the necessity of building this system upon principles harmonizing with the modern system of warfare.” While such a system had yet to be created, they listed its basic elements as comprising (1) a navy; (2) fortifications; (3) an interior system of land and water communications; and (4) a

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Ibid., pp. 275-276, and his (R.S. Browning, III’s) full-length study, Two If By Sea: The Development of American Defense Policy (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press; 1983), chapters 1-3; E.R. Lewis, Seacoast Fortifications, pp. 21-22; J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 133-144; and Walter Millis, Arms and Men: A Study in American Military History (New York: Mentor-New American Library; 1956), pp. 48-51. The state of British-American and French-American relations at this time is discussed briefly in Alexander de Conde, A History of American Foreign Policy (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons; 1963), pp. 54-71; that author’s The Quasi-War: The Politics and Diplomacy of the Undeclared War with France, 1797-1801 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons; 1966); and Albert Z. Carr, The Coming of War: An Account of the Remarkable Events Leading to the War of 1812 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday; 1960), pp. 102-186. A brief, popular account of amphibious operations on North American coasts before 1900 is provided by Arch Whitehouse, Amphibious Operations (Garden City, NY: Doubleday; 1963), pp. 23-119.

standing army backed by a well-organized militia. These all “must be combined, so as to form a complete system.” The alternative, the Board warned, was to create a situation in which the “whole coast” of the United States might, “by a single [enemy naval] expedition, be kept in alarm from Louisiana to Maine; and such is the extent and exposure of the maritime frontier, that an enemy may ruin us [economically] by a war of mere threatenings.” For this reason the costs of the “defence of the maritime frontier by permanent fortifications, and even the expense of erecting these fortifications, will ... be a real and positive economy.” If it be objected that some military men rejected the utility of fixed works on land, the Board’s members insisted that no one “has ever disputed the necessity of fortifying a maritime frontier” where troops could never take “the place of the strong batteries which are disposed along the important places.”<sup>15</sup>

This report resulted in construction of the “Third System” of coastal fortification that continued unabated over the next three decades.<sup>16</sup> Thereafter, until the disbanding of the United States’ Army’s Coastal Artillery Corps after World War II,<sup>17</sup> fortification of the

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Quotes from Colonel Joseph G. Totten’s report on the Fortification of the Seacoasts, dated 7 February 1821, as reprinted in Walter Millis, ed., American Military Thought (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill; 1966), pp. 102-111; also see J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, p. 205.

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R.S. Browning, III, “Fortifications,” p. 276, and Two If By Sea, chapters 4-5; E.R. Lewis, Seacoast Fortifications, pp. 37-66; J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 205-231.

17

United States. Department of the Army, American Military History, 1607-1958 (Washington, DC: Headquarters USA-US GPO, ROTC Manual ROTCM 145-20; 1959), p. 483. The Army’s responsibility for coastal defense then passed to the newly formed air force.

coastal frontiers remained a major, and publically popular, aspect of American military policy. Not surprisingly, the rationale in America was the same as that which had guided policy earlier in Europe. As Russell Weigley explains when speaking of the initial program, this reflected the technological realities of ship-to-shore warfare in the age of sail. Although not initially stated explicitly, when the Federal government agreed to defend the Republic's principal harbours and coastal cities it hoped its fortresses

would protect the most important points on the coast from any sudden hostile coup de main, would compel any invading force which might arrive to land at less vital places while the American forces assembled to deal with them, and would provide bases and places of refuge for an American Navy. It was a long established military dictum, confirmed by numerous examples, that good coastal fortresses would always repulse attacks by naval vessels. The fortresses offered stable gun platforms, while ships did not. Relatively few well placed shots from a fort could eliminate a whole ship with all its guns, while ships had to attempt to knock out fortress armament tediously, battery by battery, even gun by gun. Strong masonry and earthworks offered considerable proof against the solid shot of naval guns. While the fort was a stationary target, so virtually were ships, because sailing ships could not maneuver much while retaining an attacking position against forts.<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly, even the technological advances of the Age of Steam did little to increase the effectiveness of shipboard artillery vis-a-vis coastal batteries. But if a steam-power "ironclad" could hold its position during a bombardment, Mahan's Russian critic S.O. Makarov pointed out that its improved guns were "still fixed to a tossing platform and it is difficult to score a hit." Furthermore, in the high seas its unarmored, lower hull was periodically left exposed to the attacks, however difficult

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Russell F. Weigley, The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 1973), pp. 42-43.

these might be, by hostile torpedo boats.<sup>19</sup> Shore-based defensive works therefore retained their potency long after the world's fleets had abandoned the wooden walls of sail-powered ships-of-the line. According to one contemporary, in Cuba in 1898, the Spanish forts at the entrance to Santiago Harbour in 1898 "were very weak, and many of their guns are described as having been simply and inexpensively mounted on heaps of gravel." In all, the defenders had "only four modern guns, all of six inches calibre, but they sufficed to keep off the American fleet and prevent its entering the harbour until the assistance of a military expeditionary force could be obtained." Indeed, despite being twice bombarded "by the far superior ordnance of the American vessels, ... very little damage is reported to have been done to the obsolete works themselves."<sup>20</sup>

In the light of such experiences, it is hardly surprising that the construction of coastal fortifications capable of standing off even the most modern warships remained especially attractive well into the twentieth century. For isolationist-minded Americans, these installations had the added advantage of being purely defensive, and so unlikely to involve them in aggressive actions that might provoke wars with foreign powers. With the coast's strategic positions so defended, forts also left the navy free to roam the oceans, protect American commerce, harass enemy shipping, and possibly even inhibit enemy attempts to effect an offensive landing operation<sup>21</sup>. Equally important, for some

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Quoted in David R. Jones, "Admiral S.O. Makarov and Naval Theory," Naval War College Review, 47 (Winter 1994), No. 1, pp. 79-80.

<sup>20</sup>G.G. Aston, Letters on Amphibious Wars, pp. 105-106.

<sup>21</sup>

The motives for American policies of coastal defense, and for their general popularity,

such a policy also served to justify arguments for creating a permanent military establishment. “The objects for which a standing army in peace ought to be maintained,” Secretary of War John C. Calhoun told Congress on 12 December 1820, included “the garrisoning of the forts along our Atlantic frontier in order to preserve them, and to cause the sovereignty of the United States to be respected in their immediate neighborhood,” as a counterpart to “the occupying of certain commanding posts in our inland frontier to keep in check our savage neighbors, and to protect our newly formed and feeble settlements in that quarter.”<sup>22</sup>

Nine decades later Alfred Thayer Mahan, the American prophet of power, made the same point when discussing extended naval operations. In order to hope for success in such a war, he wrote, a nation must meet two conditions: “first, frontiers reasonably secure from vital injury; secondly, a navy capable of disputing control of the sea....” And he adds that the “frontier, or coast, in its broadest sense, is the base of the whole war....”<sup>23</sup> It is hard to imagine clearer statements of the American view of the nature and intended role of national military frontiers, coastal as well as those in the land-bound interior. In the interim, the report of Calhoun and the Fortifications Board had initiated construction of the already-mentioned Third System of coastal fortification, which

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are discussed in E.R. Lewis, Seacoast Fortifications, pp. 3-13.

<sup>22</sup>

As quoted in John C. Calhoun’s report “Reduction of the Army,” dated 12 December 1820, as reprinted in W. Millis, ed., American Military Thought, p. 92.

<sup>23</sup>

A.T. Mahan, Mahan on Naval Strategy, p. 181. Italics added.



continued unabated over the next three decades.<sup>24</sup> After a period of inactivity, building was renewed in the 1880s and the works equipped with updated ordnance, and again in the 1920s-1930s. In the end, however, changing military technologies and the rise of air power doomed both coastal fortifications along with the battleships they opposed. But until the disbanding of the Coastal Artillery Corps after World War II,<sup>25</sup> fortification of the coastal frontiers remained a major, and publically popular, aspect of American military policy.<sup>26</sup>

### **Coastal-Maritime Frontiers in Law**

Above we noted some of the the difficulties involved in defining and demarcating national maritime frontiers. Indeed, despite centuries of disputes over these issues, they proved to be so contentious that the world's nations only managed to achieve an

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R.S. Browning, III, "Fortifications," p. 276, and Two If By Sea, chapters 4-5; E.R. Lewis, Seacoast Fortifications, pp. 37-66; J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 205-231.

<sup>25</sup>

E.R. Lewis, Seacoast Fortifications, pp. 73-126;

<sup>26</sup>

Canadian developments in coastal defence developed similarly: see J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, Fortress America, pp. 62-63, 99, 304-305, 360-361, 369. The fortifications at Saint John, NB, are chronicled in Roger Sarty and Doug Knight, St. John Fortifications, 1630-1956 (St. John, NB: Goose Lane Editions – New Brunswick Military Heritage Project; 2003), pp. 29-67; and those of naval base of Halifax, in Harry Piers, The Evolution of the Halifax Fortress, 1749-1928, rev. and ed. G.M. Self and Phyllis Blakeley (Halifax, NS: Public Archives of Nova Scotia; 1947); Brian Cuthbertson, The Halifax Citadel (Halifax, NS: Formac Publishing; 2001); A.J.B. Johnston, Defending Halifax: Ordnance, 1825-1906 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, History and Archaeology No. 46; 1981); and James H. Morrison, Wave to Whisper: British Military Communications in Halifax and the Empire, 1780-1880 (Ottawa: Parks Canada, History and Archaeology No. 64; 1982).

international agreement – the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea – in 1982!<sup>27</sup> This did not, of course, settle all issues and one continuing problem concerns the rights of land-locked states to enjoy the use of and to profit from the earth's oceans.<sup>28</sup> Another involves the rights of passage of one nation's ships either through waterways controlled by other countries (the Suez and Panama Canals, for example, or the Turkish Straits), or through their territorial waters.<sup>29</sup> In the latter case, there may even be disputes

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The search for such a convention remained active throughout the last century. By 1930, claims for territorial waters ranged from the traditional three miles to twelve, and in that year the League of Nations convoked a Geneva Conference to settle the matter. It failed, and the question was taken up again by the United Nations which, after three conferences, finally achieved an acceptable convention in 1982. Considering the reach of modern technology, this established maritime frontiers (unless special circumstances intervened) that comprised three zones: one of territorial waters stretching out to 12 miles; one of contiguous waters extending from 12 to 20 miles; and an "Exclusive Economic Zone" (or EEZ) extending out from shore for 200 miles. On the course of these negotiations, their results, and associated issues see: John Robert Victor Prescott, Political Frontiers and Boundaries (London: Allen and Unwin; 1987), pp.125-129; Clyde Sanger, Ordering the Oceans: The Making of the Law of the Sea (London: Zed Books; 1986), esp. pp.56-69; and above all, Douglas M. Johnston, The Theory and History of Ocean Boundary Making (Kingston, Ont., and Montreal, PQ: McGill-Queen's University; 1988), esp. 75-122.

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During the prolonged negotiations for a convention, the United Nations also sought to ensure access to the sea to the world's 25 land-locked states, for whom "[l]ack of access to the sea creates a high degree of insecurity." Of these 25, 19 are developing nations, of which figure 15 "are among the less developed countries in the world." Yet in spite of "international covenants safeguarding the right of transit to the sea (across which the bulk of trade moves), and treaties of trade and transit with their neighbors, all land-locked states face higher strategic, political and economic risks owing to their geographical location;" Mahnaz Z. Ispahani, Roads and Rivals: The Politics of Access in the Borderlands of Asia (London: I.B. Tauris; 1989), pp. 12-13.

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C. Sanger, Ordering the Oceans, pp. 82-99; Donald J. Slimman, "The Parting of the Waves: Canada-United States Differences on the Law of the Sea," Behind the Headlines, 33 (April 1975), No. 6, pp. 7-10, 18-19.

over sovereignty as well. For instance, Britain early claimed sovereignty over the surrounding seas and in 1652, the refusal of Dutch Admiral Martin Tromp to recognize this claim in the Straits of Dover by lowering his flag to English Admiral Robert Blake served as the occasion for war.<sup>30</sup> Another, more contemporary example is the Northwest Passage, where the interests of Canada's land-based Arctic frontier merge with those of upholding her sovereignty against challenges in the adjoining ocean from the United States and claims of other countries (Russia and Denmark, for example) along an ill-defined coastal "natural frontier." But even if "boundaries" and other terms are usually preferred to "frontier" in this and other contexts,<sup>31</sup> the latter's use in maritime milieus for either a political or a fortified, defensive coastal border is clearly as appropriate as it is on dry land.<sup>32</sup>

### **Oceans in History: As Barriers and Highways**

The question remains, however, as to whether or not "frontier" can be applied to maritime and even oceanic environments in the more extended manner implied by

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<sup>30</sup>

J.B. Hattendorf, "Maritime Conflict," 101-102.

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Useful introductions to all aspects of this complex of issues are provided by the essays in Franklyn Griffiths, ed., Politics of the Northwest Passage (Kingston, Ont., and Montreal, PQ: McGill-Queen's University; 1987).

<sup>32</sup>

Other recent examples of such maritime frontiers are discussed in James Laxer, The Border: Canada, the U.S. and Dispatches from the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel (Toronto, Ont.: Doubleday Canada; 2003), pp. 355-361, on the Arctic, and Xavier Ferrer Gallardo, "Border Acrobatics between the European Union and Africa: The Management of Sealed-Off Permeability on the Borders of Ceuta and Melilla," in Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, ed., Borderlands: Comparing Border Security in North America and Europe (Ottawa: University of Ottawa; 2007), pp. 75-93, on the Westernmost Mediterranean..

Turner's theory and those of his critics. Even if the above "legalistic" uses are admitted, the fact remains that unless the term is used metaphorically (as in John F. Kennedy's "New Frontier") or dramatically (as in Star Trek's "Space – The Final Frontier"), a land "frontier" almost always involves overland exploration and expansion, along with the colonizing of an adjacent geographical territory and the exploitation of the resources so acquired. Given this conventional usage of the term, and the venues within which it is commonly applied, we have already noted that it is hardly surprising that the term is rarely applied in maritime milieus: for there, islands excepted, settlement is impossible.<sup>33</sup> Within this context, both oceans in general and the Atlantic in particular long were treated instead as obstacles that from the first prevented expansion into new settlement frontiers. Writing in 1997, for example, two prehistorians insist that "of all of the impediments faced by our African antecedents, the most severe would have been the open seas...." In

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This, of course, does not refer to areas claimed or reclaimed from the seas in coastal regions such as Venice or Holland; see, for example, William H. TeBrake, Medieval Frontier: Culture and Ecology in Rijnland (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University; 1985); *passim*; David Kirby and Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, The Baltic and the North Sea (London and New York: Routledge; 2000), pp. 29-37. But given the problems envisaged as resulting from today's rising sea levels, future problems may be even more severe; see George Ochoa, Jennifer Hoffman and Tina Tin, Climate: The Force that Shapes Our World and the Future of Life on Earth (London: Rodale International; 2005), pp. 156-171. Apart from relocations, some planners – such as Frits Schoute, a former professor at Delft University – have prepared plans and prototypes for floating structures – both individual homes and apartment buildings – that supposedly could result in floating cities; Report on "The Current," Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Tuesday, 5 December 2006; "Floating city near Amsterdam," [www.ecoboot.nl](http://www.ecoboot.nl). Yet as ingenious as these structures are, they remain suitable for immediate coastal waters alone.

periods of severe glaciation, of course, “growing ice caps may have stolen enough water to create land bridges that have long since disappeared.” Two such were “Doggerland” joining Britain to Europe, which is today the North Sea’s Dogger Bank, and “Beringer,” now the Bering Straits, which allowed human migration into the later British Isles and into the Americas, respectively. Yet other “sea barriers were less accommodating,” like the one between North Africa and Iberia (the Straits of Gibraltar), or that separating Java from Australia. Despite the largest ice caps, these scholars argue that “these waters never parted to permit the passage of human beings. Much nautical ingenuity (with a fair smattering of good luck) was needed to cross these obstacles.”<sup>34</sup>

Although expressed more romantically, such also was the view of oceans taken over a century earlier by one of Turner’s predecessors, Charles Dudley Warner. He envisaged his prototype frontiersman, the “Western Man,” leading “the advance in discovery, exploration, settlement,” along with “the mass of mankind,” westward to the great ocean. But when he “reached his limit in Europe, he was like a traveler stayed unwillingly.” Thereafter, Warner tells us, this prototype frontiersman “roamed along the shore of the Atlantic as restless as the surge he encountered.” When progress in navigation finally permitted the ocean’s crossing, it “was an immense relief to the Western Man to find his way across the Atlantic. To leap ashore, on a new continent,” he continues, “to run to and fro on it, to penetrate it, hack it, dig it, appropriate it, has been his masculine joy for three centuries. For the first time in history he has been unrestrained.... How he exalted

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Christopher Stringer and Robin McKie, African Exodus: The Origins of Modern Humanity (New York: Henry Holt; 1997), pp. 149-150.

in his liberty.”<sup>35</sup>

Here is the popular image of the American frontier in all its romantic, masculine, libertarian glory, and it is one in which the “great ocean” plays the negative role of “obstacle to be overcome.”<sup>36</sup> But whatever their views on the problems faced by primitive man, most recent historians have abandoned Warner’s view of the ocean as an absolute barrier, as well as his idealized frontiersman. Instead, many now prefer to stress that oceans are a unifying, not to say “globalizing,” factor in world history. “The sea,” writes one British student of coastal regions, “bonds islands with their mainlands, and links continent to continent. The tides, winds and ocean currents combine in great natural transport systems.”<sup>37</sup> Rather than a barrier to settlement in North America, the Atlantic, with one caveat, resembled other oceans in that it served as “a highway to the rest of the world.”<sup>38</sup> The caveat, of course, is that this only remains so if the sea lanes are not blocked or harassed by hostile fleets, as occurred when the the Arabs took to the

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Charles Dudley Warner, “The Western Man,” Scribner’s Monthly, 20 (August 1880), No. 4, pp. 549-550. To modern ears this sounds almost more like the rape, not the settlement, of the “New World,” a metaphor many environmentalists and Native Americans might now find as being more appropriate.

<sup>36</sup>

Gilles Proulx, for example, states that it is undeniable that the barrier of the “Atlantic Ocean curbed the development of New France;”; see his Between France and New France: Life Aboard the Tall Sailing Ships (Toronto, Ont.: Dundurn Press; 1984), p. 13.

<sup>37</sup>

Alison Gale, Britain’s Historic Coast (Stroud, Glouc.: Tempus Publishing; 2000), p. 59.

<sup>38</sup>

F. Armesto-Fernandez, Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration, p. 149.

Mediterranean in the latter seventh century,<sup>39</sup> or when the Portuguese seized command of the Indian Ocean in the early sixteenth. Indeed, such enemies did not need even to interdict an opponent's shipping. Rather, as Frederic Lane demonstrates regarding the Portuguese blockade of the Red Sea, sometimes it is sufficient only to disrupt one's opponent's commerce to such a degree that the increased costs of doing business become prohibitive.<sup>40</sup> So if we agree on the reality of Ocean as frontier, it will be hardly surprising to find that its proper exploitation at times required the presence of friendly naval forces in the same way as frontiers on land depended on military force. Whether or not this is a permanent factor, it remains clear that after 1500 the Atlantic did become a bridge linking the Old and New Worlds, as well as Europe's antechamber to other oceans and seaways leading elsewhere; that the emerging "Atlantic World was created and defined by migration;" and that it was these migrants' "intersecting paths, their shared meetings, [that] shaped" that world.<sup>41</sup>

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Varying views of the impact of Muslim Arab seapower of Europe's Mediterranean trade are presented in Daniel C. Dennett, Jr., "Pirenne and Muhammad," Speculum, 23 (April 1948), pp. 168-174; John H. Pryor, Geography, Technology, and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean, 649-1571 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1988), especially pp. 102-108; and most recently, Sean Kingsley, "Saracen Seas, Early Islam, and the Death of Rome," Minerva, 18 (November/December 2007), No. 6, pp. 44-46.

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Frederic C. Lane, "National Wealth and Protection Costs," in Jesse D. Clarkson and Thomas C. Cochran, eds., War as a Social Institution: The Historian's Perspective (New York: Columbia University Press; 1941), pp.36-42.

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Alison Games, "Migrations and Frontiers," in Toyin Falola and Kevin D. Roberts, eds., The Atlantic World, 1450-2000 (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University; 2008), p. 50.

As a consequence, those dwelling on the Atlantic coasts share what we might call a cognitive geography of diffusion that is well described by the historian Filipe Fernandez-Armesto. He writes that “wherever you go in New England, ... you are on the shore of a pond and ... the same cultures that you left behind on one side of it have spread to the other side with remarkably little change, and remarkably little loss of identity, along the way. ... Ancestral homes, ancestral grievances are easily recalled.” For all along the coast, he points out, patches of Portuguese or Irish “are dotted here and there,” all mirroring home, all looking out across the ocean, and all “surrounded with other peoples’ transatlantic reminiscences and continuities.”<sup>42</sup> In his view, New England is thus much more than “a narrow, sea-soaked coast with a culture shaped by maritime outreach.” It is, in fact, “part of a civilization of two seaboard which face each other,” of small communities spanning the Atlantic and through them, “a sense of belonging to a single civilization” which comprises much of Western Europe combined with much, if not most, of the Americas. Fernandez-Armesto believes that this essentially Atlantic community forms the essential core of “Western Civilization,” and insists that the “creation of this ocean-spanning world” is “a curious departure in the history of civilization.” This is because the “projection of people, habits, tastes, ways of life and a sense of belonging across the breadth of an ocean like the Atlantic – the shores of which are not mutually accessible except by a long journey by open sea or air – was strictly

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<sup>42</sup>

Filipe Fernandez-Armesto, Civilizations (Toronto, Ont: Key Porter Books; 2000), p. 487.



unprecedented when it began."<sup>43</sup>

Fernandez-Armesto is of course fully aware that other oceans and seas also have served as conduits of culture, be it the Mediterranean in the case of the Greeks and Romans after 800 BC, or the Indian Ocean with regard to the Hindu and Buddhist traditions which they spread throughout Southeast Asia. He argues, however, that when these "other civilizations transcended their environments of origin, they did so bit by bit, advancing across contiguous areas or narrow seas, rolling over land or leaping between islands or emporia." Despite even the Indian Ocean's "extraordinary and precocious history ... as a kernel of civilizations," he insists that it fulfilled this role largely because unlike the Atlantic, there cultural expansion "happened in an ocean which, unlike others, can be crossed by hopping between harbours or shadowing the coasts: explorers who found quick ways across it knew where they were going."<sup>44</sup> Such distinctions are of interest in themselves but for our purposes, the main point here is that scholars have increasingly recognized that the world's oceans, even in the distant past, and despite the very real perils faced by seafarers and their passengers, have all served at least as much as paths, routes or bridges as they have as barriers.<sup>45</sup> So as noted above, the opening of

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Ibid., pp. 487-488.

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Ibid.

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Kenneth J. Banks, among others, makes this point in his Chasing Empire Across the Sea: Communications and the State in the French Atlantic, 1713-1763 (Montreal, PQ, and Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University; 2002), pp. 66-67. He credits Fernand Braudel, The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, 2 vols.

the Atlantic after the 1490s also meant the opening, either directly or indirectly, of the routes connecting it with its fellows (the Arctic, Indian and Pacific Oceans), and thus gave Europe's mariners access to Daniel Boorstin's "Sea Paths to Everywhere."<sup>46</sup> In this manner, this ocean now also tied that continent's home metropolises not only to distant peripheral trading and colonial frontier regions like the Americas, but also to a web of other trading centres in Africa, India, the East Indies, and East Asia. As a consequence, the events of the 1490s began the process of a back and forth interaction not just between "the Old World and the New," but also between that of Europe and the still Older World's of the Indian subcontinent and East Asia.<sup>47</sup>

This role of highway is that allotted the Ocean in 1952 by University of Texas historian Walter Prescott Webb in his The Great Frontier which, as J.H. Elliott once observed, sought to provide an "American' interpretation of European history."<sup>48</sup> Webb

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(New York: Harper; 1976) with inaugurating this change in attitude, and Ian K. Steele, The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community (Oxford: Oxford University; 1986), with applying it to intercommunications in the Atlantic. Similar views are also implicit, and occasionally more explicit, in any number of the works cited here.

<sup>46</sup>

Daniel Boorstin, The Discoverers (New York: Random House; 1983), p. 255. This is the title he gives his section eight, which deals with the techniques of navigation and cartography in the age of discovery.

<sup>47</sup>

See, for example, Philip de Souza, Seafaring and Civilization: Maritime Perspectives on World History (London: Profile Books; 2001), and J.R. McNeill and William H. McNeill, The Human Web: A Bird's-Eye View of World History (New York: W.W. Norton; 2003).

<sup>48</sup>

J.H. Elliott, The Old World and the New, p. 57.

had trained as a Europeanist, but subsequently become involved in regional studies of the American West. He then sought to avoid many of the problems raised by Turner's thesis by transforming the American frontier into only one part of his larger "Great Frontier" that he argued had opened when Europe, after a long period of stagnation, suddenly expanded in the 1400s. Conceiving all Europe west of the Urals to be a metropolis, he identifies his "Great Frontier" as being Europe's new and extended hinterland, and as comprising the vast area of both Americas, southern Africa, Australia, and New Zealand. This was given internal coherence by various networks of inter-ocean communications, and its exploitation brought an economic "boom" which Webb sees lasting to around 1930. Being interested in the role of the New World in the rise of European capitalism, rather than the creation of the American character, Webb celebrated the corporation as the institutional symbol of this abnormal 400-year boom. Over this period, he argues, the tremendous opportunities for attaining land and prosperity easily outstripped demographic growth, a process which led to the rise of democracy and formation of the United States. Throughout, meanwhile, the world's oceans played a major role in tying the European metropolis to its frontier periphery and ensuring their mutual interaction, but they are subsumed within the same larger concept as is Turner's settlement frontier.<sup>49</sup>

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Walter Prescott Webb, The Great Frontier (1953), intro. Arnold J. Toynbee (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska; 1964, 1986), esp. pp. 1-3, 7-28, 30-32, 62-65, 142-143. The trans-oceanic, interactive approach also informs John Bartlet Brebner's North Atlantic Triangle, The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1945).

The same is substantially true of Bernard Bailyn's "westward transatlantic movement of people" to America. In some ways his study of these migrations echoes Webb and I am tempted to refer to Bailyn's thesis as that of the "great settlement frontier." This he sees as forming "the foundation of American history," as well as being basic "in ways which we are only now beginning to understand, to the history of Europe, Africa, and even, to a lesser extent, of Asia." The "elemental development" of this migratory movement from Europe, he believes, began perhaps

sometime in the early Middle Ages. It moved forward with varying speeds for several hundred years; was thrown back for a century or more after the first third of the fourteenth century; took a sudden lurch forward in the sixteenth century; slowed in the mid-seventeenth century; then sped precipitately ahead in the later seventeenth century to form in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a mighty flow that transformed at first half the globe, ultimately the whole of it, more fundamentally than any development except the Industrial Revolution. This transforming phenomenon was the movement of people outward from their original centers of habitation -- the centrifugal Volkerwanderung that involved an untraceable multitude of local, small-scale exoduses and colonizations, the continuous creation of new frontiers and ever-widening circumferences, the complex intermingling of peoples in the expanding border areas, and in the end the massive transfer to the Western Hemisphere of people from Africa, from the European mainland, and above all from the Anglo-Celtic offshore islands of Europe, culminating in what Bismarck called "the decisive fact in the modern world," the peopling of the North American continent.

In sum, Bailyn sees this migration as one of "the greatest events in recorded history," with "magnitudes and consequences [that] are beyond measure." For since 1500, he tells us, this process "has involved the displacement and resettlement of over fifty million people, and it has affected indirectly the lives of uncountable millions more."<sup>50</sup>

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Bernard Bailyn, The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction (New York:

Oceanic communications were clearly as vital to the creation of Bailyn's various settlement frontiers as they were to Webb's Great Frontier. But as in the latter, they are still seen as playing a supporting role within a larger historical drama, in which the Ocean itself does not exist as a distinct frontier to be explored and mastered in its own right. Perhaps more surprisingly, the same is true of the works of the newly revived school (or schools) of Atlantic history.<sup>51</sup> Despite the obvious merits of these studies, their authors often seem inclined to take the Atlantic crossing as a given, rather than an autonomous element of their narratives, and therefore unwittingly downplay the perils and uncertainties that even today can still plague travel by sea. These were especially daunting, of course, in the "Age of Sail," before the development of modern systems of navigation and shipbuilding. At that time the dangers and costs in ships and lives of seafaring are evident from almost any account left by either sailors or travellers, and

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I.B. Tauris; 1986), pp. 4-5. The same is true of D.W. Meinig's The Shaping of America: A Geographic Perspective on 500 Years of History, 1: Atlantic America, 1492-1800 (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1986). In passing, it is worth noting that Bailyn's "Atlantic" or "Western Hemisphere World" is, despite its extensive reach, considerably more geographically constrained than Webb's "Great Frontier."

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The various trends in contemporary writing on this topic are outlined in Bernard Bailyn, Atlantic History: Concept and Contours (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University; 2005), and David Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick, eds., The British Atlantic World (Basingstoke, Hamps. and New York: Palgrave-Macmillan; 2002), pp. 11-27. Other recent works on Atlantic history include Timothy J. Shannon, Atlantic Lives: A Comparative Approach to Early America (New York: Pearson-Longman; 2004); T.H. Breen and Timothy Hall, Colonial America in an Atlantic World: The Story of Creative Interaction (New York: Pearson-Longman; 2004); and Stephen J. Hornsby, British America, Atlantic Frontier: Spaces of Power in Early Modern British America (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England; 2005).

confirmed by even a brief glance at the statistics on vessels lost.<sup>52</sup> For as we have seen, the part played by Ocean in human history has been equivocal: they “separate the great continents from each other even as, paradoxically, they provide the means by which the world's peoples, cultures, and resources have mingled together.” Consequently, these two contrasting themes, “the sea as barrier and the sea as highway, underline all of maritime history.”<sup>53</sup>

### **Oceanic Frontiers: Issues of Definition and Historiography**

Within these contexts, then, seas and oceans are regarded as being essential elements in the creation of many non-maritime frontiers, but clearly are not considered to be the primary interest or, put differently, to be “frontiers” in their own right.<sup>54</sup> Yet in the beginning at least, they must have been de facto frontiers for those who set forth to explore them. After all, the Ocean can only serve as a bridge or highway once one knows

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During 1875-1914 alone, for instance, over 250 Nova Scotian vessels were shipwrecked or disabled in American coastal waters; John Victor Duncanson, Nova Scotian Vessels Shipwrecked or Disabled in United States Coastal Waters, 1875-1914 (Windsor, NS: West Hants Historical Society; 1997). For wider perspectives see Robert F. Marx, Shipwrecks of the Western Hemisphere, 1492-1825 (New York: D. McKay; 1975), and for those around the world in general, Kenneth Hudson and Ann Nichols, Tragedy on the High Seas: A History of Shipwrecks (New York: A & W Publishers; 1979).

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Benjamin W. Labaree, et al., America and the Sea: A Maritime History (Mystic Seaport, CT: Museum of America and the Sea; 1998), p. 3.

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Since the Ocean remained without accepted boundaries until 1982, and frequently has also been an arena of interstate competition in trade and naval conflict over what naval strategists call the “sea lines of communication,” we might ask if it should not sometimes be designated as a “contested borderland” as well as a “frontier”!

what is on the other side – something which initially was from certain. An earlier generation of historians of Britain's empire and North America recognized this full well,<sup>55</sup> and carefully chronicled the saga of the opening of the "Western Seas," as well as of the "New World" and later, of "the West." More recently, these earlier maritime historians of the actual "Age of Discovery" or "of Exploration," scholars like Kenneth R. Andrews,<sup>56</sup> "Admiral Sam" Morison,<sup>57</sup> G.J. Marcus<sup>58</sup> and John H. Parry,<sup>59</sup> have been

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See, for example, John Bartlet Brebner, The Explorers of North America, 1492-1806 (London: A.C. Black; 1933), which pays full attention to the early Atlantic explorations and crossings.

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Kenneth R. Andrews, Trade, Plunder and Settlement; Kenneth R. Andrews, Nicholas P. Canny and P.E.R. Hair, eds., The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic and America, 1480-1650 (Liverpool, UK-Detroit, MI: Liverpool University/Wayne State University; 1978/1979).

57

Samuel Eliot Morison, Builders of the Bay Colony (1930). Reprint: (Boston: Northeastern University; 1981); Sailor Historian: The Best of Samuel Eliot Morison, ed. Emily Morison Beck (Boston: Houghton Mifflin; 1977); The Great Explorers: The European Discovery of America (New York: Oxford University; 1978); The Maritime History of Massachusetts, 1783-1860, 1st ed. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin; 1921).

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Geoffrey Jules Marcus, The Conquest of the North Atlantic (Oxford: Oxford University; 1981).

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John Horace Parry, The Age of Reconnaissance: Discovery, Exploration and Settlement, 1450-1650 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; 1963). Also see W.F. Cumming, R.A. Skelton and D.B. Quinn, The Discovery of North America (New York: Elek Books; 1971); Leslie F. Hannon, The Discoverers: The Seafaring Men Who First Touched the Coasts of Canada (Toronto, Ont: McClelland and Stewart; 1971), among others.

joined by a handful of others,<sup>60</sup> of whom Felipe Fernandez-Armesto is perhaps the most prolific.<sup>61</sup>

With respect to the initial exploration of the oceanic frontier, Samuel Eliot Morison rightly observes that despite the speculations of ancient geographers and philosophers, when coastal sailors from Scotland to Spain ventured, willingly or otherwise, into the Atlantic, out of sight of land, “the same watery horizon greeted them,” regardless of how far they dared sail. Even so, men still wondered “what lay ‘over there,’ beyond the Ocean’s rim,” a region that long remained a blank on maps. True, cartographers hurried to populate this void with monsters and wonders, the above-mentioned mythical islands included. Again, for poets and priests, the blank space hid “a never-never land, where the souls of the meritorious faithful live happily without work before proceeding to one of God's many mansions.”<sup>62</sup> But if some seafarers feared that the empty Ocean might mark

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For example, see Emerson W. Baker, Edwin A. Chuchill, *et al.*, eds., American Beginnings: Exploration, Culture, and Cartography in the Land of Norumbega (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska; 1994), and Kieran Doherty, Sea Venture: Shipwreck, Survival, and the Salvation of the First English Colony in the New World (New York: St. Martin’s Press; 2007)..

61

Apart from his Civilizations, Felipe Fernandez-Armesto’s works on the maritime Atlantic Columbus and the Conquest of the Impossible (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; 1974); The Canary Islands after the Conquest of 1981; and most recently, The Americas: A Hemispheric History (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson; 2003) and Pathfinders of 2006.

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Samuel Eliot Morison, The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages, A.D. 500-1600 (New York: Oxford University; 1971), pp. 3-4. He adds (p. 4) that it “must have been a consoling thought for the families of sailors who never returned, that God had provided for them in these Happy Isles,” and discusses the mythical islands of



the edge of the World, for others it offered a “frontier” to be explored for the sake of its own possible resources, and to be traversed to see if there was, in fact, another side.<sup>63</sup>

Indeed, this is probably the best description of a seductive mirage that drew generations of experienced mariners into the often deadly search for a “Northwest Passage.”<sup>64</sup>

Whatever the case, it cannot be denied that the Ocean at least accords with Webb’s own definition of a frontier as being “not a line to stop at, but an area inviting entrance,” and “luring the venturesome towards the sunset.”<sup>65</sup>

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the Antila group and Hy-Brasil in chapter 4. Also see Paul Butel, The Atlantic, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London and New York: Routledge; 1999), pp. 5-22, and in much greater detail, Vincent C. Cassidy’s fascinating reconstruction of medieval geographical knowledge and beliefs regarding the Atlantic, The Sea Around Them: The Atlantic Ocean, A.D. 1250 (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University; 1968).

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For an interesting discussion of sailors’ attitudes in the early 1500s see Laurence Bergreen, Over the Edge of the World: Magellan’s Terrifying Circumnavigation of the Globe (New York: William Morrow; 2003), pp. 74-86.

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The early efforts in this regard are detailed in K.R. Andrews, Trade, Plunder and Settlement, esp. chapters 8-9, and 15. Recent full histories of its exploration include Margaret A. Macpherson’s popular account, Silk, Spices and Glory: In Search of the Northwest Passage (Calgary, Alb.: Fifth House; 2001), and Glyn William’s scholarly edition of texts, The Quest for the Northwest Passage (London: The Folio Society; 2007). It is interesting that in the early 1970s, a popular history of exploration listed three remaining “frontiers” as being of modern interest: “The Frozen World,” “The Roof of the World,” and the “Secrets of the Sea;” see Thayer Willis, et al., Earth’s Last Frontiers: A History of Discovery and Exploration (London: Aldus Books/ Jupiter Books; 1971).

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W.P. Webb, The Great Frontier, pp. 2-3. The American poet Stephan Vincent Benet expressed this same idea in his epic Western Star (New York: Farrar and Rinehart; 1943). Such motives would seem particularly applicable to Captain James Cook and later explorers of the Pacific where, as one writer observed, “the far horizons beckoned;” Stanley D. Porteus, The Restless Voyage (New York: Prentice-Hall; 1948). On James Cook, see Lynne Withey, Voyages of Discovery: Captain Cook and the Exploration of the Pacific (Berkeley, CA: University of California; 1987), and Hammond Innes’s

Even so, some still may insist that the impossibility of establishing agricultural settlements on the Ocean's vastness quite simply precludes the appearance of any realm frontier in the realm of Ocean.. This is clearly true if we take Turner's narrow definition of some "moving line" of pioneer-farmers along a "hither edge of free land." In this regard Filipe Fernandez-Armesto's comments on the inability of the Ocean to support a "civilization" are obviously relevant. While he admits that the Malaysian oran laut or "sea people" seemingly offer "an example of how the sea can become a human habitat," and that "the prospect of colonizing the seabed has become a favorite fantasy," he also rightly points out that it is "unusual" for people to live permanently upon the seas, and seabed colonization remains a theme for science fiction. For if the Ocean can be, and indeed is exploited in many ways, it

cannot be easily reshaped like landscape, nor can it be covered with cities, though shipwrights do a remarkable job of floating elaborate living spaces on or below its surface; and some boat peoples assemble flotillas which might qualify to be called sea-cities, or at least sea-settlements, until they are dispersed by a blast or forced apart in the search for food or shelter. People who genuinely live at sea -- rather than visiting it for temporary purposes, such as hunting, migration, exploration, trade or war -- have to adapt to the environment, rather than trying to re-model it to suit aims of their own. As a habitat, the sea is like the waste lands -- only more so: it demands cooperation and cannot be coerced.<sup>66</sup>

Or as one of today's big shipowners recently warned: "You need to respect the sea and to

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fictional but informed reconstruction, The Last Voyage: Captain Cook's Lost Diary (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 1978).

<sup>66</sup>

F. Fernandez-Armesto, Civilizations, p. 356.

understand the limits you have, because something will always go wrong out there....”<sup>67</sup>

Yet significant as the element of agricultural settlement is within Turner’s numerous and somewhat amorphous definitions, we have seen that it is only one of a number of basic characteristics advanced by the father of frontier studies and the other scholars in this field. Furthermore, students of the Pacific Ocean and its numerous archipelagos, have – perhaps understandably – been less reticent about employing the term than their Atlanticist colleagues. The historian A. Grenfell Price, for example, subtitles the last volume of his trilogy on the “invasion” and settlement of the Tropics by Western whites as “A Study of Moving Frontiers and Changing Landscapes, 1513-1958.” He then explains that this is because these invasions, “with their accompanying diseases, animals, plants, institutions, and ideologies, created a vast panorama of moving frontiers which produced some of the greatest changes of physical and cultural landscape that mankind has witnessed.”<sup>68</sup> A few pages later he adds: “By extending F.J. Turner’s magnificent conception of the moving frontiers of the invaders flowing across the United States, we can picture how other moving frontiers of Western peoples and cultures sweep across the lands and waters of the Pacific.”<sup>69</sup>

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Shipowner Giangiacomo Serena of Monaco quoted in Daniel Sekulich, Ocean Titans: Journeys in Search of the Soul of a Ship (Toronto, Ont.: Penguin Canada; 2006), p. 67.

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A. Grenfell Price, The Western Invasions of the Pacific and Its Continents: A Study of Moving Frontiers and Changing Landscapes, 1513-1958 (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1963), p. v.

<sup>69</sup>

Ibid., p. 1. On p. 61 he also suggests enlarging Turner’s “vivid pictures of moving

As this suggests, Grenfell Price includes that ocean's islands with the continental rims and hinterlands as part of a coherent region caught up in the great "sweep of Western settlement."<sup>70</sup> More recently, the French scholar Jean Heffer has justified his own concept of "The Frontier of the Pacific" by claiming to use Turner's shifting sets of "frontier" characteristics. He, too, begins by distinguishing between the European "precise line along which two sovereign states meet" and Turner's frontier – the "constantly shifting region between the Atlantic and Pacific" that served as the hearth of American democracy. Apart from this "'frontier' on land," however, he argues that "...in the course of their history Americans have explored other frontiers, maritime in nature, of which the most extensive was the Pacific Ocean." Citing Turner, he insists that in this case the term "'frontier' signifies a zone of varying width separating 'civilization' from 'savagery.'" Heffer believes this zone had "occupied a vast, ill-defined space where the manifestations of civilized and uncivilized life merged to differing degrees," sometimes subtly, sometimes in stark contrasts.<sup>71</sup> On this basis he insists that in Turner's sense, the term frontier "can be applied to the vast ocean [the Pacific]," the 70 million square miles

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frontiers" so that they pass from the Cumberland Gap to the Rockies a century later, and then continue on "to embrace the vast throngs of peoples, diseases, plants, and cultures which poured into the Pacific regions by sailing ship, wagon, canoe, and sledge in the early stages, and later by the steamship, railway, motor-car, and aircraft."

<sup>70</sup>

Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>71</sup>

Jean Heffer, The United States and the Pacific: History of a Frontier, trans. W. Donald Wilson (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame; 2002), p. 1. I have outlined Heffer's argument at some length since, to my knowledge, it is the only extended study that specifically claims to apply the Turner thesis per se to an ocean.

of which “provided the geographical setting where, throughout two centuries of history, American ‘civilization’ and ‘savagery’ were to meet.” Opening with the arrival of the first American ship in China in 1784, this frontier “was far from fixed” and “constantly evolving” in accord with the extent that American economic, political and cultural influences waxed and waned, and then waxed again. But over time, Heffer believes that these elements of American “civilization” developed an “inexorable dynamic,” but that the victory over Imperial Japan in 1945 brought this frontier (like Turner’s in 1893) to an end when the Pacific emerged as an “American Lake.”<sup>72</sup>

Before leaving Heffer’s theoretical introduction, a few comments are in order. Firstly, while he is certainly justified in rejecting the narrow definition of “frontier” as an advancing line of settlement, his somewhat high-handed adoption of the “civilization vs. savagery” paradigm – perhaps the least palatable aspect of Turner’s thought – and belief in the “inexorable dynamic” of American expansion, offers useful ammunition to those critics who argue that any talk of a “frontier” is merely a smoke screen for some form of Social-Darwinist imperialism. On the plus side, however, his recognition that a “complex mechanism” underlay that frontier dynamic should remind us that in the Turner model -- if such it can be called -- actual settlement, agricultural or otherwise, is only one, albeit important, aspect of what was by any account a very complex set of dynamically evolving elements.

From a somewhat different and, given contemporary attitudes, more respectable

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Ibid., pp. 2-7.

perspective, American historian Charles King's recent treatment of the Black Sea as a frontier also deserves close consideration. He begins by drawing on Owen Lattimore's study of Inner Asia,<sup>73</sup> and he accepts the latter's distinction between "boundary" and "frontier." Whereas a boundary "represents the intended limit of political power, the farthest extent to which a state or empire is able to exert its will on a geographical space," a "frontier is the zone that exists on both sides of the boundary." This latter, King continues, "is a place inhabited by distinct communities of boundary-crossers, people whose lives and livelihoods depend on their being experts in transgressing both the physical boundaries between polities as well as the social ones between ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups." As examples of such "frontier peoples," he cites Eurasia's Cossacks, French Canada's coureurs des bois, and the American West's mountain men, among "many others like them," who represent "not simply peripheral actors in human history but distinctive, highly adaptive cultures in their own right."<sup>74</sup>

This said, King advances a second aspect of the frontier theories outlined above that he regards as relevant to his study. This is the suggestion that attitudes regarding a frontier and its frontiersmen "can play a central role in the elaboration of imperial and national identities" within its home metropolis. Having quoted Turner on the impact that

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Here King is citing Owen Lattimore's Inner Asian Frontiers of China (Washington, DC: American Geographical Society; 1951), chapter eight. These same points are elaborated in a range of contexts in Lattimore's essays as collected in his Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers, 1928-1958 (London: Oxford University; 1962).

<sup>74</sup>

Charles King, The Black Sea: A History (Oxford: Oxford University; 2004), p. 8.

the frontier's natural challenges had on American self-identity and social-development, King then adds the criticisms of Lattimore and others that Turner had "missed another crucial relationship." This is that "[p]eople shape themselves against the image of the frontier as much as, perhaps even more than, the frontier shapes them." He then argues that historically, the lands on the Black Sea's rim have been "frontiers in both these senses: the locus of distinct communities defined by their position between empires or states, and a foil against which the cultural and political identities of outsiders have been built." Even so, he also warns that we must not regard "the sea as a timeless frontier at the meeting place of different civilizational zones – Greek and barbarian, Christian and Muslim – or perhaps as part of a periphery of the imagination – Oriental, Balkan, Eurasian – against which Europeans have perpetually defined themselves." For to do so, King insists, "is to read back into the distant past the prejudices of the present."<sup>75</sup>

King's point here is that the Black Sea's history is not static, but that

the longer history of the sea and its littoral is not simply the story of a geographical periphery and its gradual absorption into empires and, later, modern states; nor is it only a story of the insidious construction of the region as backward and uncivilized. Rather, it is about the ebb and flow of the sea's peripheral status, a long sine wave oscillating between backwardness and isolation on the one hand, and substantial integration with the wider Mediterranean, European, and Eurasian worlds on the other. The frontiers that have run along the coastline or through the middle of the sea have been multiple -- ecological, military, religious, economic, even epidemiological -- but none has been perennial, and the outlines of one have rarely overlapped exactly with those of another.

While King's account of the ebb and flow of the Black Sea's history need not concern us

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<sup>75</sup>

Ibid., p. 9.

here, it is worth noting that he sees “much of the sea” as comprising his first type of frontier “in the early modern period, when the steppeland along the northern shore was still a sparsely populated prairie – the ‘campi deserti et inhabitati’ of early European cartographers – at the intersection of the Ottoman empire, Poland, and Russia.” By the nineteenth century, he argues that it had become “a frontier in the latter sense” since its waters “lay between Europe’s rising and falling powers, the Russians and the Ottomans,” an interaction that helped shape the identity of Imperial Russia and others’ vision of that empire as “continental” Eurasian power.<sup>76</sup> But these two variants aside, King remains convinced that with regard to most of the attributes accorded frontiers in the literature reviewed above, we “can find the same dynamics at work as much on watery frontiers as on terrestrial ones.”<sup>77</sup>

### **Oceanic Frontiers: Dynamism and Sequences**

Common to all these studies, although not necessarily advanced as prominently as in Heffer, is the dynamism of a frontier’s development. In this regard we might recall Robert Berkhofer’s view of the “frontier” as a “process.” As he sees it, in American-English “frontier ... denotes both a series of recurring sequences of white settlement as

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<sup>76</sup>

Ibid., pp. 9-10. The region’s characteristic as the first type of King’s frontier are described in William H. McNeill, Europe’s Steppe Frontier, 1500-1800 (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago; 1964). Imperial Russia’s self-identity and problems in its definition are dealt with in Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini, eds., Russia’s Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University; 1997), esp. chapters 4,5,8, and 14.

<sup>77</sup>

C. King, The Black Sea, p. 9.



the English and the Americans advanced into the interior of what is now the United States, and the overall results of those sequences for comprehending the impact of the frontier upon American life and history in general."<sup>78</sup> Moreover, as pointed out in Part One above, such sequences usually seem to have involved successive stages in the exploitation of a frontier's or periphery's varied resources for the benefit of a "metropolis," and in the extension of the latter's control or domination of that periphery. Thus one often finds exploration creates a hunting, trapping and trading frontier that then leads to further exploration. The former is meanwhile followed by a mix of farming, lumbering and, on occasion, mining frontiers – all of which demand the protection of a proper military frontier of the old European continental and American colonial type. In this process, opportunities are offered for exploration and adventure, for gaining wealth and social advancement, for profitable banditry, for the adaptation of old and creation of new social institutions and customs on the part of those involved. At the same time, the stay-at-home public of the metropolis is being renewed and reinvigorated ideologically by new sets myths and heroes, and economically by the flow of fresh resources from the periphery to the centre, as well as by the creation of new markets on the settlement frontier for its manufactures.<sup>79</sup>

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Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., "The North American Frontier as Process and Context," in Howard Lamar and Leonard Thompson, The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1981), p. 43.

<sup>79</sup>

The "frontier-metropolis" relationship is discussed by W.P. Webb, The Great Frontier, pp. 8-13.

As modified by specific historical contexts, these generalizations are as applicable to the frontiers of Rome and, in part, to British India as they are to the American West. In addition, it seems to me that there is much to recommend Berkhofer's approach elsewhere, and in no case more so than when discussing an "oceanic" or "maritime" frontier – and more specifically, when examining the development of various aspects of the traditions and practices of the world's mariners, and of the coastal communities, cultures and occasionally, the civilizations which spawn and maintain these mariners' activities. We might, for instance, speak of a North Atlantic "fishing frontier" off of Newfoundland in the 1400s-1600s, or of the oceanic "trading frontier" traversed by Nova Scotia's and New England's "China clippers" in the 1800s, or even of a contemporary "oceanic mining and drilling frontier," as modern technologies offer a range of new possibilities for economic exploitation in terms of oil, natural gas and chemical extraction. As in the case of land frontiers, all these could both exist simultaneously (as in the case of fishing and trading), or sequentially (as in the case of oceanic trading and seabed mining).

Here it is appropriate to outline both the stages of our exploration and exploitation of the Ocean a frontier, and some of the specific topologies included under any general rubric of "oceanic" or "maritime frontiersman." With regard to the first, we should note that coastal dwellers began depending upon the seas for a living by exploiting shoreline resources in times long before the advent of farming, and then progressed to developing

inshore fisheries and making short trading runs along the coast.<sup>80</sup> Millennia later, these practices gradually had expanded to include deep-sea fishing and commercial-exploratory voyages over ever longer distances which, in the Atlantic, brought the colonization of the off-shore islands and archipelagos (for example, the Faeroes, Iceland, the Canaries, and Azores), and eventually of the eastern rim of the Americas. As was the case of frontiers on land, each stage of development and expansion involved the creation of its own particular group of “maritime frontiersmen” – the inshore and long-distance fishers, the merchant and naval seamen, the officers who commanded and led them, and the bandit-pirates that preyed on them. Politically this entailed not only the creation of oceanic merchant and naval fleets, but also the asserting of political control by the emerging centralized states along the European Atlantic rim over their immediate coastal frontiers.<sup>81</sup> This was particularly the case with Britain, where it meant the “pacification” Scotland’s Hebrides and Northern Islands<sup>82</sup> and, most difficult of all, Ireland.<sup>83</sup> And

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The use made of coastal and offshore resources by prehistoric hunter-fishers-gatherers is discussed in chapter six below.

<sup>81</sup>

For a convenient summary of the factors involved in this process see Filipe Fernandez-Armesto, “Exploration and Discovery,” in Christopher Allmand, ed., The New Cambridge Medieval History, VII: c.1415-c.1500 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1998, 2006), pp. 171-201.

<sup>82</sup>

The subjugation of Scotland’s Northern and Western Isles, largely under James VI/I, is briefly recounted in Magnus Magnusson, Scotland: The Story of a Nation (New York: Grove Press; 2000), pp. 406-408, and in more detail in James R. Nicolson, Shetland (Newton Abbot: David and Charles; 1972), pp. 48-58; Ian Grimble, Clans and Chiefs: Celtic Tribalism in Scotland (Edinburgh: Birlinn; 1980), pp. 160-173; Bruce Lenman, England’s Colonial Wars, 1550-1688: Conflicts, Empire and National Identity (London

significantly, the attitudes and patterns of rule there were replicated in the New World.<sup>84</sup>

### **Oceanic Frontiers: Economic Considerations**

At this point an extended discussion of the characteristics of a presumed oceanic frontier is still premature. But in the interim, another aspect of Owen Lattimore's analysis

deserves mention. He not only recognizes that the Anglo-Americans' "epic march across

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and New York: Longman-Pearson; 2001), pp. 147-156; and W.C. MacLeod, "Celt and Indian," in Paul Bohannon and F. Plug, eds., Beyond the Frontier: Secret Processes and Cultural Change (Garden City, NY: Natural History Press; 1967), pp. 28-39. These last two also deal extensively with Ireland while a more general discussion of the long-term process, from a Marxist point of view, is provided Michael Hechter, Internal Colonization: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966 (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul; 1975), chapters 3-4.

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Apart from the titles cited above, the subjugation of Ireland is the subject of numerous studies. These include Cyril Falls' classic Elizabeth's Irish Wars (New York and London: Barnes and Noble/ Methuen; 1970); Margaret MacCurtain, Tudor and Stuart Ireland (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan; 1972); Richard Berleth, The Twilight Lords: An Irish Chronicle (1978), reprint (New York: Barnes and Noble; 1994); Steven G. Ellis, Tudor Ireland: Crown, Community and the Conflict of Cultures, 1470-1603 (London and New York: Longman; 1985); Nicholas P. Canny, Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins; 1988); and James Scott Wheeler, The Irish and British Wars, 1637-1654: Triumph, Tragedy, and Failure (London and New York: Routledge; 2002).

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On this issue see the works just cited above as well as K.R. Andrews, N.P. Canny and P.E.H. Hair, eds., The Westward Enterprise; Canny's own "Protestants, Planters and Apartheid in Early Modern Ireland," Irish Historical Studies, 25 (November 1986), 105-115; The Elizabethan Conquest of Ireland: A Pattern Established, 1565-1576 (New York: Hassocks; 1976); and "The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America," The William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd Ser., 30 (October 1973), 575-598. Also see his "The Origins of Empire: An Introduction," pp. 1-33, and "England's New World and the Old," pp. 148-169, as well as Jane H. Ohlmeyer, "'Civilizing of those Rude Partes': Colonization within Britain and Ireland, 1580s-1640s," in N.P. Canny, ed., The Oxford History of the British Empire, I: The Origins of Empire: British Overseas Expansion to the Close of the Seventeenth Century (Oxford and New York: Oxford University; 1998), pp. 124-147..

the continent to the Pacific” had been “initiated by the crossing of the Atlantic,” but also that thereafter, “even our period of most active continental expansion was never free of the influences and effects of sea power, sea-borne commerce, the investment of European capital, and acceleration of population growth by the immigration of Europeans.” Moreover, he argues that as the result of some 350 years “of convergence,” since about 1600 “the potentials of expansion by sea and expansion by land interact with each other more closely than ever before....”<sup>85</sup> And inasmuch as frontiers are associated with this expansion, we should be alerted to the possible existence of maritime as well as continental frontiers.

Furthermore, a moment’s reflection suggests that oceanic economic frontiers have both preceded (the Newfoundland fishery) and followed (the China clippers) the founding of associated and adjacent settlement frontiers on the coast, and have shared many of the characteristics of frontiers that are confined solely to land borders. Thus Spanish galleons often braved dangers matching those of the later covered wagons that crossed America's Western Plains, and the raiding pirates that hunted them had their counterparts in the renegades, highwaymen and bandits so frequently found in frontier and “borderland” regions the world over.<sup>86</sup> Still more significantly, the same hopes of economic betterment that so frequently inspired men to migrate to newly opened

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Owen Lattimore, “Inner Asian Frontiers: Chinese and Russian Margins of Expansion,” in O. Lattimore, Studies in Frontier History, pp. 134-135.

<sup>86</sup>

For a recent comparison of pirates and bandits see Philip de Souza, Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1999), pp. 6-8.

frontiers on land equally encouraged others to "go to sea" and "see the world" in search of adventure or, more prosaically, for a career in search of fish, whale oil or treasure, or for all three.<sup>87</sup>

This has remained true throughout history. Consider the comments of one British naval writer on the ceremony of 1960 that marked the five-hundredth anniversary of the death of Portugal's Prince Henry "the Navigator," who backed the mariners who launched the Age of Discovery. He notes that the world's coasts were now mapped, the North and South Poles fixed, and even lone sailors were circling the Earth. Even so, the seven tenths of its surface covered by the sea

remain almost as mysterious in its depths as the great unknown of Prince Henry's time. New creatures continually are being discovered, some believed extinct centuries ago, new sea bed formations occur, new sources of vastly valuable minerals such as manganese, nickel, cobalt and copper are being located miles below the surface; yet beyond the Continental Shelf most of the ocean bed is still uncharted and remains shrouded in abyssal darkness.

Within this context, he continues, marine biologists are "like the the navigators of Prince Henry's time who brought untold wealth to Portugal." But he warns that the "scientists, geologists and physicists cannot help mankind unless there are engineers and businessmen to exploit their discoveries – to harness the energies of the oceans, to bring its [sic!] rich mineral wealth to the surface, and above all to feed the world." Calling for

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87

See, for example, Eric W. Sager's Seafaring Labour: The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914 (Montreal, PQ, and Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University; 1989, 1996), pp. 136-163, and Ships and Memories: Merchant Seafarers in Canada's Age of Steam (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia; 1993), pp. 29-40.

the British government to support a range of oceanographical efforts to explore this new El Dorado, he asks whether or not his countrymen are “far-sighted enough to believe that a knowledge of the depths and their proper use is as important to our generation as was the perimeter of the seas to Prince Henry, and far more important to our well-being than putting a man on the moon?”<sup>88</sup>

### **Oceanic Frontiers: A Neglected Phenomenon**

From all that was said above it seems perverse to argue that the term “frontier” cannot appropriately be applied to seas and oceans, or that Ocean as a “frontier” does not still offer opportunities for exploration and enrichment.<sup>89</sup> Yet whatever view one takes of the nature of a maritime or oceanic frontier, it remains hard to deny that oceans were long relegated to a secondary realm of public and scholarly interest. Speaking generally in the 1960s, Clement Atlee remarked: “We seem to pay less attention to the bottom of the sea than to the backside of the Moon!”<sup>90</sup> and by the end of 2007, nearly 95 percent of the ocean floor still remained unexplored.<sup>91</sup> Apart from the public in general, this statement

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I.G. Aylen, “Thoughts at Cape St. Vincent,” The Naval Review, 57 (January 1969), No. 1, pp. 39-40.

<sup>89</sup>

This is, of course, if we can avoid thoughtlessly destroying much of their resources and value!

<sup>90</sup>

Quoted in I.G. Aylen, “Thoughts at Cape St. Vincent,” p. 40.

<sup>91</sup>

Congressman Jim Saxton, “Exploring the Oceans: A Responsibility to Meet,” in the “Review & Forecast” section of Sea Technology, 49 (2008), No. 1, p. 28. He is citing the United States Commission on Ocean Policy.

is equally applicable to most non-maritime and non-naval historians.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, despite the obvious centrality of seas and oceans in human affairs, until recently the fact that “maritime history” remained a backwater within the larger discipline explains the general neglect of their role which, Michael Pearson argues, “has produced skewed, incomplete histories of human kind.”<sup>93</sup> With the exception of professional naval historians, until comparatively recently the field was mainly of interest to “buffs” and local chroniclers.<sup>94</sup> Yet its practitioners clearly have had much to offer, and it is high time that they have finally begun to “come in from the cold” to join their other professional colleagues.

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92

Apart from the remarks on this issue in chapter three above, the place of maritime studies in the historian’s traditional frame of reference is indicated by fact that of the 17 volumes in Blackwell’s projected series “The Making of Europe,” only one -- Michel Mollat du Jourdin, Europe and the Sea, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Oxford: Blackwell; 1993) -- deals with maritime matters.

<sup>93</sup>M. Pearson, The Indian Ocean, p. 3.

94

Of studies of seas and oceans, before 1980 only the Mediterranean has been the subject of continuous, serious study. Apart from Fernand Braudel’s celebrated two-volume The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II (1966, 1973), this sea was the subject of the works cited in footnote 28 of the “Introduction” above. By contrast, general histories of the Atlantic have been few and far between. They include Stanley Rogers, The Atlantic (London: George G. Harrap; c. 1929); Jacques Godechot, Histoire de l’Atlantique (Paris: Bordas; 1947); Leonard Outhwaite, The Atlantic: A History of an Ocean (New York: Howard McCann; 1957). Until recently other seas and oceans were even less well served. Stanley Rogers, however, did publish companion works to his Atlantic study in the form of The Pacific (London: George G. Harrap; c.1929), and The Indian Ocean (London: George G. Harrap; 1932). Lesser seas were treated in Oliver Warner, The Sea and the Sword: The Baltic (New York: W.W. Morrow; 1967) and Gheorghe Ioan Bratianu, La Mer noire Des origines a la conquete ottomane (Munich: Romanian Academic Society; 1969).



The same is true of the nautical and maritime archaeologists who also have only begun to occupy a serious position within their discipline over the last three or four decades.<sup>95</sup> Even today, critics still complain that non-maritime “archaeologists have all too often ignored water travel.”<sup>96</sup> Similarly, anthropologist Jon Erlandson observes that for decades anthropological theory was dominated by perceptions that marine resources had a “low value compared to large land animals and that intensive aquatic adaptations developed very late in human history.” As he points out, there was general agreement “that humans only began to seriously adapt to aquatic environments during the last 15,000 years or so.” In turn, he says, this has “had a stultifying effect on the evolutionary study of aquatic adaptations and societies, maritime migrations, and the development of

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For example, Stuart Piggott’s major study, *Ancient Europe: A Survey* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing; 1965) has twice as many references to shields as to boats and ships. A change of focus was signaled in 1972 with the appearance of the *International Journal of Nautical and Underwater Archaeology* (now simply of nautical archaeology), and the founding in that same year of the Institute of Nautical Archaeology, in 1973 of the Hellenic Institute of Marine Archaeology, in 1981 of Nautical Archaeology Society, and so on. The history of nautical archaeology, as well as the details of these and other similar organizations, is outlined in George F. Bass, *Archaeology Beneath the Sea* (New York: Walker; 1975), and his “Introduction: Reclaiming Lost History from Beneath the Seven Seas,” in G.F. Bass, ed., *Beneath the Seven Seas: Adventures with the Institute of Nautical Archaeology* (London: Thames and Hudson; 2005), pp. 10-27; Robert D. Ballard, “Deep Water Archaeology,” in John Pollini, ed., *Terra marique: Studies in Art History and Marine Archaeology in Honor of Anna Marguerite McCann on the Receipt of the Gold Medal of the Archaeological Institute of America* (Oxford: Oxbow Books; 2005), pp. 171-176; and the appropriate entries on individual institutions and techniques in James P. Delgado, *British Museum Encyclopedia of Underwater and Maritime Archaeology* (London: British Museum Press; 1997).

<sup>96</sup>

American archaeologist Peggy Jodrey quoted in J.M. Adovasio with Jake Page, *The First Americans: In Pursuit of Archaeology’s Greatest Mystery* (New York: Random House; 2002), p. 279.

boats and other seafaring technologies.” As a result, he concludes, the evolutionary significance of aquatic habitats has been relegated to “an essentially incidental role in the broad-spectrum revolution leading to agricultural societies and civilizations.”<sup>97</sup>

There are a number of possible factors that explain the neglect of the maritime dimension in history, anthropology, archaeology and, above all else at present, in the environmental policies of most of the world’s governments. Sometimes the motives are specific to the discipline in question. Archaeologists, for instance, depend on their analyses of the physical remnants of past material cultures. And if these demonstrate that seaborne colonists early established settlements on islands in Southeast Asia, we still have little or no evidence of the actual craft used in the process. So while it may be clear that “the technology to build blue-water boats with sails almost certainly existed in the upper Paleolithic,” all traces of the wood or skin used in constructing these craft has long since disintegrated. As a result, the archaeologists arguing for the maritime colonization of North America, be it from Asia or even Europe, have to argue from supposition and by analogy with developments elsewhere.<sup>98</sup> Thus James Chatters insists

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Jon M. Erlandson, “Exploring Landscapes Beneath the Sea. Review Article of N.C. Flemming, ed., Submarine Prehistoric Archaeology of the North Sea (Council of British Archaeology [CBA] Research Report 141, 2004),” in The International Journal of Underwater Archaeology, 35 (April 2006), No. 1, p. 146. Also see the comments of Geoff Bailey, “The Wider Significance of Submerged Archaeological Sites and Their Relevance to World Prehistory,” in Flemming’s Submarine Prehistoric Archaeology of the North Sea, pp. 4-7, as well as Erlandson’s own “Aquatic Adaptations: Paradigms for a New Millennium,” Journal of Archaeological Research, 9 (2001), pp. 287-350, esp. 288-289.

98

J.M. Adovasio with J. Page, The First Americans, pp. 275-280 (quote p. 279), outlines

that “there is no doubt that boats adequate for ocean travel, at least within sight of land, were part of East Asian technologies early enough to put people in the New World by 20,000 years ago.”<sup>99</sup> But until the remnants of such a boat are discovered, this can be only a compelling hypothesis leaving Chatters and his compatriots to pray that some physical evidence of a boat may yet turn up.

David Waters, a leading British historian of the art and science of navigation, recently suggested a more general reason for the neglect of maritime matters in all the disciplines mentioned. “It is very difficult,” he writes, “to convince many landsmen scholars that ship-handling, navigation, and hydrography – ‘the art of the seaman’ – in one word, seamanship, and its history is a discipline as exacting as mastery of the classics or of mathematics.” Since seamanship must “be mastered to sail a ship in a safe and timely manner,” he argues, “to comprehend also how this was done in the past

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the case for a pre-Clovis migration from Europe, possibly as early as 18,000 to 15,000 years before present. James C. Chatters, Ancient Encounters: Kennewick Man and the First Americans (New York: Simon and Schuster-Touchstone Books; 2001, 2002), pp. 258-261, summarizes this argument. Meanwhile, the genetic evidence for European settlers, from the Solutrean culture (in Spain and Southern France, c. 21,000-17,000 years ago) is presented in Steve Olson, Mapping Human History: Discovering the Past Through Our Genes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin; 2002), pp. 198-207, and refuted in Nicholas Wade, Before the Dawn: Recovering the Lost Genes of Our Ancestors (New York: Penguin; 2006), pp. 59, 117-118.

<sup>99</sup>

Ibid., pp. 251-259 (quote, p. 255). This issue, and the problems of evidence on boats and otherwise, is the subject of Tom Koppel’s Lost Worlds: Rewriting Prehistory – How New Science is Tracing America’s Ice Age Mariners (New York and London: Atria Books; 2003). He also dismisses the Solutrean thesis (pp. 269-270).

necessitates no less mastering by study knowledge of the seamanship of the past.”<sup>100</sup> In this opinion Waters only seconds the opinion of other maritime historians who complain, as another noted English scholar put it, that a “fundamental weakness of the academic approach in this field is that the savant, however erudite, is for the most part totally lacking in practical experience and understanding” and so, unlike the seaman, “apt to overlook the important fact that the Pole-star is invisible in the high latitudes in summer.”<sup>101</sup> Again, when the celebrated American Samuel Eliot Morison set out to write his biography of Columbus, he discovered none of his predecessors appeared “to have gone to sea in quest of light and truth.” Arguing that “armchair navigation is both dull and futile,” “Admiral Sam” organized the “Harvard Columbus Expedition,” bought a

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David W. Waters, “Seamanship and Columbus’s Landfall in 1492 and 1992,” Mariner’s Mirror, 79 (1992), No. 1, p. 97.

101

G.J. Marcus, The Conquest of the North Atlantic, p. xii. In this regard he points to E.G.R. Taylor, an eminent British specialist on cartography and navigation who, he says, “regardless of the fact that at no time in her career was she capable of getting a rowing-boat across the Round Pond, would not hesitate to pass judgement on the professional competence of some of the greatest mariners in history.” Elsewhere (p. 175) he lauds the Norwegian professor A.W. Brogger as being “one of the few -- the very few -- scholars who would go to professional seamen on advice on matters of seamanship and navigation.”

In a similar vein Basil Greenhall, the doyen of British boat archaeology, recently remarked that the study of “early pilotage and navigation ... demands not merely a purely academic approach; the most important contributions have perhaps been made by practical seamen of an earlier generation .... It has been said that adequately to study primitive navigation it is necessary yourself to have been dependent professionally at sea on methods of navigation in use before the development of radio and all that has followed;” Basil Greenhall, “Introduction,” in Arne Emil Christensen, ed., The Earliest Ships: The Evolution of Boats into Ships (London and Annapolis, MD: Conway Maritime/ US Naval Institute; 1996), p. 10.

barkentine, and set out “to cross the ocean under conditions very similar to those of his [Columbus’] day, and to view islands and coasts as through his eyes.”<sup>102</sup>

The utility of such technical qualifications admitted, there is another more general consideration that may explain our neglect of oceanic history and why, like the Provençal peasants quoted in our introduction, we often prefer to turn our backs on the sea. This was suggested recently by Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, well known for his studies of the “Age of Discovery” and proof that non-sailors need not be banned from studying nautical affairs. He freely admits that he is “the sort of maritime historian who gets seasick in the bath,” who is “unseduced by the romance of the brine,” for whom “tar is tacky and the ocean unaesthetic,” who avoids sea trips whenever possible, and who has spent hours of tedium and discomfort aboard the yachts of hosts “who have assumed that someone who writes so much about the sea must love it.” But while he accepts that this may make him “an inadequate spokesman for the sea,” he believes that there is a much more common mental attitude at work. He defines this as “our conviction that man is not made for the sea, nor the sea for man,” a conviction which explains why our

literature of the sea ... is dominated by tales of heroism, madness, and longing for land. This, I suspect, is why marine studies are relatively neglected in the academic world. Of course, from a land-bound perspective, the sea seems literally marginal. Because it is not a normal or ‘natural’ habitat, it evades the attention of those riveted by the obvious

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102

Samuel Eliot Morison, Admiral of the Ocean Sea: A Life of Christopher Columbus (Boston: Little, Brown; 1942), pp. xvi-xix. Also see his comments on the difficulty of explaining the dangers faced by early navigators to modern observers in The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages, pp. x-xii.

And if despite his “landward leanings” he was drawn to its study, he concludes that this was “simply because I recognize its importance.”<sup>103</sup>

### **Maritime-Oceanic Frontiersmen: The Ocean’s Call**

Regardless of whether or not man and the sea are made for each other, or the dismissive attitude of so many officials, intellectuals, scholars, and farmers, the Ocean nonetheless retains a certain fascination. Here the comments of a student of ice, Ocean’s component-companion of water, seem equally applicable to the salt seas themselves. “People write

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Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, “Maritime History and World History,” in Daniel Finamore, ed., Maritime History as World History (Salem, MA, and Gainesville, FL: Peabody Essex Museum/ University of Florida; 2004), p. 8. That he is not alone in this respect is evidenced by what Charles King terms “a boom area” in “the history of seas;” The Black Sea, p. 251. Apart from his own study, a rash of new titles has recently appeared, partly as a result of the new Routledge series “Seas in History.” To date this last includes Paul Butel’s The Atlantic (1999), Michael Pearson, The Indian Ocean (2003), and David Kirby and Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, The Baltic and the North Sea (2000), with volumes on the Mediterranean and the Pacific to come. To the studies of the Mediterranean listed in footnote 28 of the “Introduction” we should add Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History (Oxford: Blackwell; 2002) and John Julius Norwich, The Middle Sea (London: Chatto and Windus; 2006). Other recent contributions include O.H.K. Spate, The Pacific since Magellan, 3 vols. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota; 1979, 1983, 1988); Walter A. McDougal’s sometimes eccentric Let the Sea Make a Noise: A History of the North Pacific from Magellan to MacArthur (New York: Basic Books; 1993); K.N. Chaudhuri, Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1985); and Kenneth McPherson, The Indian Ocean: A History of the People and the Sea (Oxford: Oxford University; 1993); Paul Jordan, North Sea Saga (Harlow, UK: Pearson-Longman; 2004); Alan Palmer, Northern Shores: A History of the Baltic Sea and Its Peoples (London: John Murray; 2005); Neil Ascherson, Black Sea: The Birth Place of Civilization and Barbarism (London and New York: Jonathan Cape/ Random House-Vintage; 1995, 1996); Jan Rogozinski, A Brief History of the Caribbean (1999, 2000); and Robert H. Gore, The Gulf of Mexico: A Treasury of Resources in the American Mediterranean (Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press; 1992).

poetry about ice and play with it,” she tells us; “they try to master it and they submit humbly to it. They use it, they rely on it, they do everything they can to avoid it.... Some cultures think of it as an essential natural resource, while others abhor it.” But above all else, she concludes: “No one is indifferent to ice – at least, not once they stop to think about it.”<sup>104</sup> The same is true of Ocean and many rural “lubbers,” even those standing far inland, backs resolutely set against Ocean’s restless waves, still sometimes feel their relentless tug. What else makes us flock to seaside beaches on the holidays, or drives us to build expensive mansions on the hurricane-lashed keys or in flood plains along coasts like that of the hurricane-lashed Gulf of Mexico?

More impressive still, sometimes the prairie landsman even answers Ocean’s siren call.<sup>105</sup> True, his ostensible motives vary from a need to make money to a desire to see the world. But at some level, there still seems to be a need to plumb a mystery, be it natural or divine, that can act as much as a restorative as it does as a means of destruction. Writers like Herman Melville and Joseph Conrad understood this full well. *Ishmael*, narrator of the tale of the hunt for the whale *Moby Dick*, explains that whenever he is beset by boredom, discontent and restlessness, to drive off the spleen “... I quietly take to the ship. There is nothing surprising in this. If they but knew it, almost all men in their degree, some time or other, cherish very nearly the same feelings towards the ocean

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Pauline Couture, *Ice: Beauty, Danger, History* (Toronto, Ont.: McArthur; 2004), pp. 2-3.

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See, for example, the memoirs of a Canadian prairie sailor, “The hired hand at Idlewood Farm,” George Zarn, *Prairie Boys Afloat* (High River, Alb.: Author; 1979),

with me.” As an example, he points to the “insular of the Manhattoes [Manhattan], belted round by wharves as Indian isles by coral reefs,” surrounded by the “surf” of commerce. If “the streets take you westward,” the city’s extreme downtown is “the Battery, where that noble mole is washed by waves, and cooled by breezes, which a few hours previous were out of sight of land.”<sup>106</sup>

There Melville bids us observe “the crowds of water-gazers,” and then to

[c]ircumambulate the city on the dreamy Sabbath afternoon. Go from Corlears Hook to Coenties Slip, and from thence, to Whitehall, northward. What do you see? -- Posted like silent sentinels all around the town, stand thousands upon thousands of mortal men fixed in ocean reveries. Some leaning against the spiles; some seated upon the pier-heads; some looking over the bulwarks of ships from China; some high aloft in the rigging, as if to get a still better seaward peep. But these are all landmen; of week days pent up in lath and plaster -- tied to counters, nailed to benches, clinched to desks. How then is this? Are the green fields gone? What do they here?

But look! here come more crowds, pacing straight for the water, and seemingly bound for a dive. Strange! Nothing will content them but the extremist limit of the land; loitering under the shady lee of yonder warehouses will not suffice. No. They must get just as nigh the water as they possibly can without falling in. And there they stand – miles of them – leagues. Inlanders all, they come from lanes and alleys, streets and avenues – north, east, south, and west. Yet here they all unite. Tell me, does the magnetic virtue of the needles of the compasses of all those ships attract them thither?<sup>107</sup>

For Melville, the sea or Ocean is merely the ultimate expression of water which, even inland, exerts its pull on us in the form of mighty rivers, lakes, smaller brooks, and

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<sup>106</sup>

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick; or, The Whale* (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, "Great Books of the Western World," v. 48; 1952), p. 1.

<sup>107</sup>

*Ibid.*, pp. 1-2. It is interesting that in this respect, Melville’s land-bound New Yorkers reach for the extreme edge of the sea in the same manner as some of the frontiersmen mentioned above sought the extreme edge of settlement within the continent’s interior.



so on. Any path you take, he insists, in the country takes you to “some high land of lakes” or, ten to one, leads “you down in a dale, and leaves you there by a pool in the stream,” which has “magic in it.” Similarly, “meditation and water are wedded for ever” while an artist, painting “the dreamiest, ... most enchanting bit of romantic landscape in all the valley of the Saco,” has his “shepherd's eye were fixed upon the magic stream before him.” After all, he concludes, who would “travel your thousand miles” to see Niagara were it but a cataract of sand,” or would

the poor poet of Tennessee, upon suddenly receiving two handfuls of silver, deliberate whether to buy him a coat, which he sadly needed, or invest his money in a pedestrian trip to Rockaway Beach? Why is almost every robust boy with a robust healthy soul in him, at some time or other crazy to go to sea? Why upon your first voyage as a passenger, did you yourself feel such a mystical vibration, when first told that you and your ship were out of sight of land? Why did the old Persians hold the sea holy? Why did the Greeks give it a separate deity, and own brother of Jove? Surely all this is not without meaning. And still deeper the meaning of that story of Narcissus, who because he could not grasp the tormenting, mild image he saw in the fountain, plunged into it and was drowned. But that same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life, and this is the key to it all.<sup>108</sup>

For all its literary flourishes, Melville’s account of the draw of the water in general, and of Ocean in particular, does little more than express a sentiment widely-held among sailors, coastal dwellers and even seaside vacationers.<sup>109</sup> And when his “robust boys” did go to sea, they entered a fraternity of those who feel they have experienced the special

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<sup>108</sup>

Ibid., pp. 2-3.

<sup>109</sup>

See, for instance, the views expressed by a range of authors in Meddy Stanton, ed., We belong to the sea: A Nova Scotia Anthology (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing; 2002).

realm of the Ocean's world of wind and water, of danger and adventure. Writing of the Atlantic, for instance, "Admiral Sam" Morison stressed that the fair winds and ease of navigation experienced by Columbus on his outward voyages from Spain were far from normal, especially for those who sailed the northern seas. He warned that

anything might happen to you in the North Atlantic, even in summer; and in the sixteenth century everyone but French fishermen avoided sailing in winter. Westerly gales hurled crested seas against your little barque and forced it to lay-to for days; easterly gales drenched the sailors with chilling rain; fierce northerlies ripped their sails and cracked their masts. Between weather fronts even the whisper of a wind would often die and a white calm descend, so calm that one might think that the winds were worn out; then the fog closed in and the sea became a shimmering mirror reflecting the filtered rays of the sun. In high latitudes in summer one could forget whether it was day or night, while the sails slatted monotonously and the yards and rigging dripped rime. Plenty of men died on these northern voyages, but never of thirst. In a big fishing fleet, two days later, days of white calm might pass with jollity and humor from ship to ship, but for little knots of men confined to a small vessel, and no other human being with a thousand miles, the experience might be maddening. In the era of discovery, sailors would break out their sweeps and try to row their heavy vessels out of the calm, just to have something to do. It was a life for strong men and boys, not for women; the Greenlanders did indeed take women on their short voyages to Vinland, but there is no record of French or English taking them to America before Cartier's second voyage; and they were forcats, convicts."<sup>110</sup>

Needless to say, the conditions of the most seafarers' lives did improve considerably over the following centuries but, even in the twentieth century, the North Atlantic's vicious reputation was continuously reaffirmed by the fate of vessels like the Atlantic and Titanic, the rigors of battles between convoys and U-boats during two World Wars, and a string of lesser disasters both before and after 1945.

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S.E. Morison, The European Discovery of America: The Northern Voyages, ix-x.

Other seas and oceans have their own peculiarities and dangers. As a result, throughout history a sailor's life has always, everywhere, meant the courting of peril. Small wonder, then, that seafarers – not unlike combat veterans or miners – often see themselves as a separate breed, acting in response to drives and impulses ignored by most of their fellows. While we will return to this sense of unique calling later, it clearly has relevance to our present discussion of common attitudes to Ocean as a frontier. Here we might note that this sense is especially strong in Great Britain, a state whose wealth and power since 1500 has depended above all else upon “ruling the seas,” and whose writers have repeatedly celebrated maritime themes. As a consequence, the cult of the sailor received the same special prominence in a developing modern British consciousness as did that of the frontiersman in the self-perceptions of Americans. This sense, and a suggestion that the fraternity of seamen is a uniquely English institution, is evident in Conrad's description of a meeting of old friends on a yacht on the River Thames. “This could have occurred nowhere but in England,” he writes, “where men and sea interpenetrate, so to speak – the sea entering into the lives of most men, and the men knowing something or everything about the sea, in the way of amusement, of travel, or of bread-winning.”<sup>111</sup>

### **Maritime-Oceanic Frontiersmen: A Matter of National Selection?**

Others have gone much further than Conrad in insisting that rather than representing a

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Joseph Conrad, “Youth,” in *A Conrad Argosy*, intro. William McFee, illus. Hans Alexander Mueller's woodcuts (Garden City, NY: Doubleday; 1942), p. 3.

universal response to the “call of the sea,” such developed maritime sensibilities are an uniquely national trait of Britons, or at least of the English. Unlike “your Frenchies,” for instance, the British are especially “oceanic” by nature so that for writers like Norman Longmate, British history is essentially a maritime history. “In the beginning was the sea,” he writes, and then points out that Rule Britannia (written in 1740) “boasted of a time: ‘When Britain first, at heaven's command,/ Arose from out the azure main....’” He admits that “the truth was less dramatic,” in that it was merely 7000 years ago -- “late in the geological timescale” -- that British Isles were finally separated from Europe, but he believes that this event was nonetheless decisive. “Henceforth the sea was to be the dominant influence on all the inhabitants of the island,” he tells us, “even on those who never saw it. From the moment when an invader’s [Julius Caesar’s] pen cast the first light upon it, the story of Great Britain is a maritime one.”<sup>112</sup> Or again, as the naval author Brian Lavery explained still more recently, “for all their differences, the island peoples of Britain became for a while the most successful maritime nation in modern history, creating the largest empire of all time, backed for more than 200 years by the strongest navy and the largest merchant fleet.” And, he adds, Britain “is still a maritime nation, though not in the way she once was.”<sup>113</sup>

In Lavery’s view, this simply reflects the realities of the geographical fact that Britain

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<sup>112</sup>

Norman Longmate, Defending the Island: From Caesar to the Armada (London: Collins-Grafton; 1990), p. 15.

<sup>113</sup>

Brian M. Lavery, The Island Nation: A History of Britain and the Sea, foreword Ellen MacArthur (London: Conway Maritime Press; 2005), p. 15.

is an island. This is significant, he argues, not just because “the British need ships to communicate with their neighbours” and, in the modern era, “just as much with America and the Empire as with nearby Europe.” It also is partly “because the British, as long as they have a strong navy and economy, have been able to take as much or as little [part] of European affairs as they want to,” and so avoided the impact of the totalitarian movements. Equally important, since the island is long and narrow, no place is over eighty miles from the sea while good, easily navigable rivers serve to connect it with the inland regions. Given the great advantages of sea over land transport, before the rail networks of the mid-1800s Britain had a great advantage in that its “coastline is blessed with large and small natural harbours formed by estuaries, bays and sounds.” Consequently, Lavery argues, the sum of “these advantages gave Britain the motive and the opportunity to become a great maritime power in the days of sail and steam.”<sup>114</sup>

This national self-image of the English, if not of all the British, as a resolute “small island people” has sunk deep roots in the nation’s popular culture, especially in its modern wartime epics. As Lavery points out, Noel Coward’s “great naval film,” In Which We Serve, ends with the lines: “There will always be other ships, for we are an island race.”<sup>115</sup> The same theme, albeit in the grimmest terms, runs through The Cruel Sea, Nicholas Monsarrat’s saga of the men and ships waging the convoy war in the

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Ibid.

115

Quoted in Ibid.

North Atlantic during World war II.<sup>116</sup> Either explicitly or implicitly, all such works echo traditions dating from the days when England's little ships set sail to battle Spain's Great Armada, traditions inculcated in British school children through the legends of great sea warriors such as Francis Drake, the last fight of Sir Richard Grenville and his plucky Revenge,<sup>117</sup> and Lord Horatio Nelson's battles on the Nile, at Copenhagen and at Trafalgar. Thus for Tennyson England was the "island queen who sways the floods and land" whose victories at the Nile, Copenhagen and Trafalgar taught Napoleon "humility/Perforce, like those whom Gideon school'd with briars."<sup>118</sup> At that last battle Nelson had signaled that "England expects every man will do his duty" and, as the final verses of Henry Newbolt's poem "Drake's Drum" make clear, those men included the legendary dead as well:

Drake he was a Devon man, an' ruled the Devon seas,  
 (Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)  
 Rovin' tho' his death fell, he went wi' heart at ease  
 An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.  
 "Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore,  
 Strike et when your powder's running low;  
 If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven,  
 An' drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago."

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<sup>116</sup>

Nicholas Monsarrat, The Cruel Sea: A Novel (New York: Alfred A. Knopf; 1951).

<sup>117</sup>

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892), "The Revenge. A Ballad of the Fleet" (1878), in Jon Stallworthy, ed., The Oxford Book of War Poetry (Oxford: Oxford University; 1984), pp. 111-114.

<sup>118</sup>

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892), "Buonaparte" (1832), in James Stephens, Edwin L. Beck and Royall H. Snow, eds., Victorian and Later English Poets (New York and Cincinnati: American Book Company; 1934, 1949), p. 12.

Drake he's in his hammock till the great Armadas come,  
 (Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)  
 Slung atween the round-shot, listin' for the drum,  
 An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.  
 Call him on the deep sea, call him up the Sound,  
 Call him when ye sail to meet the foe;  
 Where the old trade's plyin' an' the old flag flyin'  
 They shall find them ware an' wakin', as they found him long ago!<sup>119</sup>

Interestingly enough, a recent biographer points out that in writing his epic, The Winning of the West, Theodore Roosevelt celebrated his “backwoodsmen” and “frontiersmen” as being “a gifted and robust people who were kin to the fearless sea voyagers of hundreds of years before, who risked their lives to explore the farthest reaches of the globe.”<sup>120</sup>

Others are understandably skeptical of such claims, Spanish historian Filipe Fernandez-Armesto dismisses them as myths, pure and simple. Referring to the tradition

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Sir Henry Newbolt (1862-1938), "Drake's Drum," in Herbert Strang, comp., Treasures of English Verse (London-Oxford: Humphrey Milford-Oxford University; 1925, 1936), p. 84. These traditions once were also shared by English-speakers throughout the Empire before, and even after World War I. I myself first heard “Drake’s Drum” at the knee of my then “lefty” mother, who also taught me the songs of the International Brigades. She never seemed troubled, however, that most of Drake’s successors somehow managed to miss the battles for Madrid of her day!

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Aida D. Donald, Lion in the White House: A Life of Theodore Roosevelt (New York: Basic Books; 2007), p. 59. Her reference is presumably to Roosevelt’s first chapter, “The Spread of the English-Speaking Peoples,” in T. Roosevelt, The Winning of the West, 1: From the Alleghenies to the Mississippi, 1769-1775 (n.p.: Bibliobazaar; 2006), pp. 21-37. Despite Roosevelt’s romantic, not to say racist view, his insight that the factors and attitudes of British society that promoted the seafaring in the 1500s were similar, if not the same, as those promoting both the colonization of America, and the subsequent Westward Movement, has much to recommend it. But we should that similar mixes of Protestantism, commerce, seafaring, and colonialism existed on the French Atlantic seaboard, as well as in Holland and Scandinavia.

just outlined, he writes that “in modern times the English -- though not, I think, other peoples of the island -- have cultivated what might be called a small-island mentality: all their most tiresome history books stress, sometimes in their opening words, that their history is a function of their insularity.” With titles such as “Our Island Story” and “The Offshore Islanders,” these proclaim that “their island ‘arose from the azure main’ and is like a gem ‘set in the silver sea,’” a sentiment that repeatedly “resounds in national songs and scraps of verse” like the samples just cited. But Fernandez-Armesto dismisses most of this as “sham.” He argues that this legend was constructed during the 1700s-1800s when “the English invested heavily in naval security.” Then the ruling elite simultaneously “created the cult of the ‘English eccentric’” and “projected an image as ‘a singular race, one which prides itself on being a little mad.’” In his view, this is merely “a way of idealizing the outcome of isolation,” which is reflected in Britain’s “relationship with the rest of the European Union [that] is institutionalized in opt-outs.”<sup>121</sup>

Apart from “reveling in affected isolation,” Fernandez-Armesto points out that “the English are also fond of the countervailing myth of themselves as a nation of mariners, for whom the sea is ‘England’s way to win wealth’ and for who trade routes are the veins of life.” But he insists this, too, is sham since England’s “maritime vocation is not

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F. Fernandez-Armesto, *Civilizations*, p. 328. He makes this statement in the context of his definition of “small-island civilizations,” discussed at some length in the chapter on coastal communities below. He dismisses England’s claim to this status on the grounds that the islands comprising Great Britain are too large and too endowed with diverse resources.



particularly that of an 'island race.'" Rather, he rightly points out that the maritime vocation is found equally among other peoples along Western Europe's Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic coasts. Among these latter, ironically, claims of exceptionalism are also typical, and in every case he believes the claim "disproves itself."<sup>122</sup> Perhaps so, but once established, a myth obviously develops a power of its own and that of Britain's "island peoples" is in this way typical.<sup>123</sup> Nonetheless, even some historians of the Royal Navy basically agree with Fernandez-Armesto, although they date the rise of English maritime concerns from the sixteenth, not the eighteenth century. "The notion that any people has a natural propensity for the sea," writes Christopher Lloyd, "that it has salt in its blood, does not commend itself to the historian." He argues that "a numerous seafaring population" only develops as the result of "specific geographical advantages and economic necessities" since few "in any age follow the sea of their own accord, or willingly embrace so hard a way of life."<sup>124</sup>

In the view of Lloyd and others like him, England had not emerged from the Middle

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<sup>122</sup>

Ibid. The attitudes of other living around the northwestern seas are discussed at length in D. Kirby and M.-L. Hinkkanen, The Baltic and the North Seas, especially chapters 2-4.

<sup>123</sup>

As Walter Connor remarks about nationalism: "It is not what is, but what people believe is that has behavioral consequences;" quoted in Jerry Z. Muller, "Us and Them: The Enduring Power of Ethnic Nationalism," Foreign Affairs, 87 (March-April 2008), No. 2, p. 20.

<sup>124</sup>

Christopher C. Lloyd, The British Seaman, 1200-1860: A Social Survey (London: Collins; 1970), p. 28. For similar attitudes elsewhere in Northwest Europe see D. Kirby and L. Hinkkanen, The Baltic and the North Seas, pp. 38-45.

Ages as “a seafaring nation.”<sup>125</sup> While the kingdom had remained open to the outside world and sustained trade relations for a range of exotic and luxury “necessities” (for example, French wine), it did so largely by means of the bottoms of the Hanseatic League, the annual Italian merchant flotillas, and other foreign vessels. Some English merchant shipping, as well as an off-shore fishing fleet, did exist before the 1500s, but that country’s rulers still only occasionally saw a need to build and maintain either their own merchant marine or a permanent navy.<sup>126</sup> Despite the Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Norman conquests, and the fury of the raiding Northmen, the English long relied for their security primarily on the isolation provided by the “defensive moat” of the Channel and surrounding seas.<sup>127</sup>

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C.C. Lloyd, The British Seaman, 1200-1860, p. 28; also see Ronald Hope, Poor Jack: The Perilous History of the Merchant Seaman, (London: Chatham Publishing; 2001), chapters 3-5.

126

The classic general study of British sea power in this period is William Laird Clowes, The Royal Navy: A History from the Earliest Times to 1900, 7 vols. [1897-1903] (London: Chatham Publishing; 1996), v. I (to 1588), and other relatively full, recent studies include David Howarth, British Sea Power [1974], postscript Margaret Rule (New York: Carroll and Graf; 2003), chapters 1-13, and N.A.M. Rodger, The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain, 660-1649 (New York and London: W. W. Norton; 1997), chapters 1-23. Also useful is the scholarly but narrowly focused study of F.W. Brooks, The English Naval Forces, 1199-1272, foreword Geoffrey Callender (London: A Brown and Sons; 1932).

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For the role of the Channel in British life and naval affairs up to the Armada of 1588 see, for example, Peter Unwin, The Narrow Sea: Barrier, Bridge and Gateway to the World – The History of the Channel (London: Headline Book Publishing-Review; 2003), pp. 1-114, and Norman Longmate, Defending the Island: From Caesar to the Armada (London: Hutchinson; 1989).

Apart from the Cabots, who were “Genoese by birth and Spanish by inclination,” Lloyd admits that England contributed little to the first century (1450-1550) of the “Age of Discovery.” Rather, it was the Portuguese and Spanish who developed the ships, techniques and charts that opened the Atlantic and Ocean’s seaways, and so “were responsible for the geopolitical revolution which brought England and the counties of the western seaboard of Europe into the centre of the world map, instead of being, as heretofore, on the periphery of maritime affairs.” But by 1550 English voyages were becoming longer as Bristol ships sailed regularly to Iceland and others increasingly exploited the Newfoundland fishery, entered the Mediterranean and Baltic, and even journeyed to the West African coast. Lloyd himself sees the departure from Greenwich of the expedition to open a Northeast Passage in 1553 as being as “good a date as any for the beginning of the British maritime empire,” and insists that England only became a true seafaring nation in the latter 1500s.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, the American classical naval historian Chester Starr insists that throughout history, “islands ... commonly have relied on the sea itself to protect them against outside threats and so tend not to have navies of their own,” and maintains that England’s rulers “only came to realize the necessity of meeting enemies on the sea rather than on the shore in the days of the Spanish Armada.”<sup>129</sup>

Although Lloyd’s colleague, C.J. Marcus, pays lip service to “the national character

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C.C. Lloyd, The British Seaman, 1200-1860, pp. 28-29.

129

Chester H. Starr, The Influence of Sea Power on Ancient History (Oxford: Oxford University; 1989), p. 13.

and aptitudes of her people, and the wisdom and foresight of their rulers,” he basically agrees. Only in the 1500s, he argues, did England see “the foundation of the battle fleet, the organization of a permanent, effective naval administration and a true shipping policy,” and believes that the subsequent growth in seapower “was fostered by supremely favourable geographical situation, a sufficiency of good natural harbours, [and] an adequate territory and population....” Yet he also makes the important point that origins of this process go back to England’s medieval coastal towns and ports whose “merchants and mariners, together with craftsmen concerned in kindred callings, were engaged in activities far removed from the normal agricultural round of Englishmen.” Thanks to their trade and shipping interests, this “mercantile element, at first very small in comparison with the total population, was practically outside the feudal regime.” So while their activities may indeed represent “the main and vital thread” of Britain’s naval history before 1500,<sup>130</sup> they are also indicative of the gap existing between the relatively small, “frontier” coastal communities on the one hand, and on the other, the bulk of the largely farming populations of most interior regions of the pre-modern world and, in the majority cases, of the modern world as well.<sup>131</sup>

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Geoffrey Jules Marcus, A Naval History of England, 1: The Formative Centuries (Boston: Little, Brown-Atlantic Monthly Press; 1961), p. 1.

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The English government’s implicit recognition of this situation is evident from the stress placed on the Newfoundland fishery as a nursery for seamen-recruits for the Royal Navy; see Gerald S. Graham, “Fisheries and Sea Power,” in George A. Rawlyk, ed., Historical Essays on the Atlantic Provinces (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart; 1967), pp. 7-16.

For this reason we must agree in questioning the long-accepted “truism” that the inhabitants of islands like Britain or Minoan Crete were naturally “a lively-minded people, with the outward-looking adventurous spirit of an island race,”<sup>132</sup> who took to the sea easily, almost as a matter of course. Here the comparison with medieval England is again not without interest. H.E.L. Mellerish admits that one can live in the middle of rural England, or even on New York’s Manhattan Island, and “be unconscious of the sea.” However, he somewhat perversely insists the situation in Crete was very different since there, “nowhere can one be much cut off from the sea,” and as proof cites the importance of maritime images painted in Minoan frescos. Perhaps, but as I observed on the infinitely smaller island of Siphnos, which still sustains a strong maritime tradition, a “peasant” farmer can live virtually next to the sea and still have no maritime skills or experience whatsoever. Indeed, he will only visit the coast if it borders his farmland, and will even prefer a long, overland hike to attend a church festival to a much easier and quicker boat trip along the coast. And as Mellersh admits, “more than anything else the Cretan would need to have been a farmer, and a hard-working farmer at that,” and he

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J.L. Fitton, *et al.*, The Minoans (London: The Folio Society; 2004), p. 68. It is interesting that some British writers like Fitton and H.E.L. Mellersh (quoted below) stress the beneficial effect of being “islanders” on the Minoans in a manner that a German like F. Matz (University of Marburg), “Minoan Civilization: Maturity and Zenith,” separate fascicle of Volume 2, Chapters IV (b), XII, of The Cambridge Ancient History, rev. ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1964), or a Frenchman like Raymond Matton, La Crète antique, 2<sup>nd</sup> exp. ed. (Athens: L’Institut francais d’Athens; 1960), do not.

accepts that the “mass of Minoans were ... peasant farmers.”<sup>133</sup> So whatever their proximity to coast, there is no particular reason to believe that there was a numerous populace of ready-made seafarers in the era of Minoan Crete’s supposed mastery or “thalassocracy” of the Aegean.

Fernandez-Armesto pays particular attention to the cultural development of islands and warns: “No scientific law, no sociological model can predict when or exactly where the sea will turn a small island into a civilization.” In fact, he points out, “many small islands are untouched by such effects. It seems odd – yet some island people have never developed any maritime culture; and sometimes, if they have it, they abandon it.”<sup>134</sup> Crete’s Minoan rulers, for example, seemingly were forced to look to the sea by their island’s lack of mineral resources. This may well have been a blessing in disguise.

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Without the need to use external trading networks to remedy this deficiency, the Minoans might very well have followed Malta in developing a “small island” culture or civilization within its own confines, in virtual isolation from outside influences, and then ended by seemingly being doomed by that same insularity and position on an isolated maritime frontier. Presumably originating in southern Italy or Sicily, the first settlers appear to have reached Malta, the Easter Island of the Mediterranean, in c.5000 BC. For

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<sup>133</sup>

H.E.L. Mellersh, The Destruction of Knossos: The Rise and Fall of Minoan Crete [1970] (New York: Barnes and Noble; 1993). pp. 83–84.

<sup>134</sup>

F. Fernandez-Armesto, Civilizations, pp. 328-329. As other examples he cites the inhabitants of the Canary Islands and Tasmania, both of whom abandoned the maritime skills that had been required for settling their homes in the first place.

the next 1500 years they maintained only scattered occupations until matters changed radically with the opening of the Ggantija phase in c. 3500 BC. Contacts with outside world then virtually ended while the small rock-cut tombs gave way to megalithic stone-built tombs or ritualistic shrines and mausoleums. This period continued on with the onset of the Tarxien phase in c.3000 BC, and only ended in c.2500 BC, the reasons for which collapse remain uncertain and debated. Those suggested include over-population, internal social stresses, lineage-competition in monumental building, an over-excess of insular spirituality, and the probable over-exploitation in general of a fragile environment.<sup>135</sup>

Whatever the answer, Fernandez-Armesto rightly suggests that this ancient civilization is too often ignored since it appears to be a “false start” with “no demonstrable influence on anything that succeeded it.” Unlike the Eastern Mediterranean, the western sections of that sea have no “islands of heroic status, where – somewhat shakily – a continuous civilized tradition has been traced, which fed into that of Greece and so into ‘the west’ and the world.” In his view the “tug of this thread, the lure of ‘roots,’ leads to the Bronze Age Aegean, back through Minoan Crete, to the Cycladic Islands in the third and second millennia BC and to the elegant marble harpists

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Alasdair Whittle, Europe in the Neolithic: The Creation of New Worlds (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1996), pp. 317-322; A. Colin Renfrew, Before Civilization: The Radiocarbon Revolution and Prehistoric Europe (1973. Reissue: Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books; 1978/ 1990), pp. 161-182; Chris Scarre, Exploring Prehistoric Europe (Oxford: Oxford University; 1998), pp. 70-83; and Mattanyah Zohar, “Malta,” in Brian M. Fagan, The Oxford Companion to Archaeology (New York and Oxford: Oxford University; 1996), pp. 398-400.

of Karos, who do seem to strum in a new and glorious era.”<sup>136</sup> For unlike Malta, the Cyclades utilized their individual niches of resources and skills within a seaborne network of frontier (with respect to the “civilized” Near East) trade and communications to first survive, then to prosper, and ultimately to blossom before merging with the larger “island” civilization” attributed to Crete.<sup>137</sup>

When assessing these last and other cultures, we should rid ourselves of the notion that influences flow only in one direction. In this case we should entertain the possibility that the much-celebrated Minoan civilization of Arthur Evans’ Crete was in fact an amalgam of that island’s agriculturally-based palatial culture with that of the maritime raiding and trading networks created earlier by the seafaring frontiersmen of the Cyclades. At the very least, the Minoans doubtless benefitted by hiring Cycladic shipwrights and sailors, or both. After all, as Greek archaeologist Spyridon Marinatos observes when speaking of the fleet of the legendary King Minos, “the seamen of the islands ... had always been fine mariners but had never been led by a warlike character who was more than a mere-pirate chief.”<sup>138</sup> They therefore may have welcomed service with the prosperous, agricultural Cretans, and brought with them “some of their former

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<sup>136</sup>

F. Fernandez-Armesto, Civilizations, pp. 344-345.

<sup>137</sup>

The concept of island niches and trading networks is presented at length in Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, The Corrupting Sea: A Study in Mediterranean History, pp. 224-230.

<sup>138</sup>

Spyridon Marinatos, Crete and Mycenae (London: Thames and Hudson; 1960), p. 30.



customs and a measure of enterprise and imagination."<sup>139</sup>

Furthermore, the mere fact that people lived on the coast, be it that of an island or a mainland, does not necessarily entail that they themselves become mariner-frontiersmen who take to the sea, let alone maintain a war fleet. Medieval Britain aside, this may well have been the case with Minoan Crete where, despite the need for metal imports and presence of the timber resources available for shipbuilding, the only hard evidence of native shipping is the depiction of "round" trading ships on the handful of seal-stones, of possible "Minoan" (if not "Cycladic") "cruisers" pictured on fresco on the island of Thera (Santorini), and structures there that are identified as boat-sheds.<sup>140</sup> If it seems unlikely that the Cretans lacked a fleet in light of their dependence on trade, this was almost certainly the case with legendary Troy. Situated near the Bosphorus, this city served as the northern anchor the the same trading frontier-interface between east and west for which Crete served as the southern terminus.<sup>141</sup>

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J.L. Caskey, "Greece, Crete and the Aegean Islands in the Early Bronze Age," separate fascicle of Volume I, Chapter XXVI(a), of The Cambridge Ancient History, rev. ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1964), p. 38.

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Cretan ships and shipping are discussed in Shelly Wachsmann, Seagoing Ships and Seamanship in the Bronze Age Levant, foreword George F. Bass (College Station, TX, and London: Texas A&M University/ Conway Maritime Publishing; 1998), pp. 86-111; Sean McGrail, Boats of the World from the Stone Age to Medieval Times, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University; 2004), pp. 113-122; and Lionel Casson, The Ancient Mariners: Seafarers and Seafighters of the Mediterranean in Ancient Times, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University; 1991), p. 18-21.

141

On the nature of these frontier networks see Cyprrian Broodbank, An Island Archaeology of the Early Cyclades (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 2000, 2002), pp. 283-287, 350-361, and R.L.N. Barber, The Cyclades in the Bronze Age (London: Gerald

Yet this city's role as a commercial entrepot did not result in the creation of a war fleet. Although a seeming paradox, writes Barry Strauss, "Troy was a seaport that did not fight at sea. Founded by continentals looking outwards at the sea, it became rich by offering sailors a foothold in the wind, but without developing its own navy." He regards the Trojans as one of those Bronze Age peoples described by Thucydides as being lowlanders, but not "sea-goers," at least not when it came to naval warfare. "The Trojans no doubt had boats" with which to project power as far as nearby islands, he concludes, "but not of the quality of Greek warships nor in large enough numbers to compete" with an armada like that which was launched by Mycenae.<sup>142</sup> And if merely living on an island does automatically endow one with an alert and vigorous mind, a sense of adventure, or a desire to see the world, there is no reason why Crete, any more than Troy, should necessarily develop as a maritime civilization. In fact, the contrary may well have been the case. On the one hand, ancient Crete's agriculturally-based social system may well have provided the prosperity that supported the Minoan palaces, and which served as an economic locomotive for the expanded trading network that developed along the Eastern Mediterranean's Cycladic-Aegean frontier. Yet on the other, this same farming-

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Duckworth; 1987), pp. 184-194.

<sup>142</sup>

Barry Strauss, The Trojan War: A New History (New York: Simon and Schuster; 2006), pp. 44-45, 47. He also notes that Troy is not exceptional in having had no navy while being situated on the sea. As another example he cites Japan before the late 1800s, and insists that even such "commercial powerhouses" in the maritime arena like the Hanse and Dutch Republic paid insufficient attention to maintaining war fleets sufficient to preserve their trading empires. His reference to Thucydides, The Peloponnesian War, chapter I, section 7.

orientated economy also probably militated against the inevitable social reorganization and disruption involved in the creation of a Cretan fleet. If so, it would seem that the Aegean-Minoan “civilization” of the mid-second millennium BC developed from a unique frontier union of two apparently separate and very different entities: a settled farming society with the wealth of a classic Near Eastern palace regime, and its small-island neighbours who had developed the skills and energy of maritime frontiersmen.

### **Unique Aspects of Ocean Frontiers**

This gap between “landsmen” and “boatmen” is a major theme of this study but, for the moment, we will return to the nature of maritime or oceanic frontiers. In the cases discussed above, an oceanic frontier is a sphere of practical exploitation which seemingly offers an opportunity for fulfilling material and other personal aspirations in the sense of those promised to pioneers by Soule and Greeley. But if oceanic and maritime frontiers share many aspects of the land-bound frontiers of Turner, Bolton and their followers, they also differ in at least three major respects from the latter.

Firstly, the oceanic frontier is much more extensive than its land-oriented counterparts. Take, for instance, the American frontier of Turner and company. As “process,” the Westward Movement passed slowly through a series of successive geographical “frontiers” – the Ohio Valley, the Mississippi-Missouri, the great plains, and the Rockies – and then “closed” on reaching the Pacific coast. In this sense, its extent clearly was limited by geography.<sup>143</sup> But a traveller venturing on Nathaniel

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Although their precise limits varied over time, Owen Lattimore’s ecological frontier

Philbrick's "first" American frontier, the sea,<sup>144</sup> might span the world. In a series of successive voyages, lasting only few years each, a young mariner-frontiersman<sup>145</sup> from Nova Scotia or New England could sail down the eastern coasts of the Americas, round Cape Horn to the Pacific and, via Hawaii to China and the East Indies, on to India, and then round the Cape of Good Hope, up the eastern coasts of Africa and Europe to

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boundaries, as presented in his essay "The Frontier In History" in his Studies in Frontier History, pp. 469-491, were also geographically limited. The only exception here is Webb's "Great Frontier, which also spanned the globe. But unlike the "Great Oceanic Frontier" described here, which could be entered from any of a host of ports along the way, Webb's frontier is, by definition, "Eurocentric."

144

Nathaniel Philbrick, Sea of Glory. America's Voyage of Discovery: The U.S. Exploring Expedition, 1838-1842 (New York: Viking; 2003), p. xvi, remarks: "America's first frontier was not the West; it was the sea."

145

Although I use the term "frontiersman" throughout, there obviously were "frontier women" both in the Westward Movement and on the oceanic frontier as well. The former are discussed in a range of studies that include Annette Kolodny, The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630-1860 (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina; 1984) and Sandra L. Myres, Westering Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800-1915 (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico; 1982). The growing literature on women at sea includes Julie Wheelwright, Amazons and Military Maids: Women Who Dressed as Men in Pursuit of Life, Liberty and Happiness (London: Pandora Press; 1989); Jo Stanley, ed., Bold in Her Breeches: Women Pirates Across the Ages (London: Pandora Press; 1995); Suzanne J. Stark, Female Tars: Women Aboard Ship in the Age of Sail (London: Constable; 1996); Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling, eds., Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University; 1996); Joan Druett, She Captains: Heroines and Hellions of the Sea (New York: Simon and Schuster; 2000. Reprint: Barnes and Noble; 2005); David Cordingly, Women Sailors and Sailors' Women: An Untold Maritime History (New York: Random House; 2001); Sara Lorimer, Booty: Girl Pirates on the High Seas, (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books; 2002); and Jane Robinson, Pandora's Daughters: The Secret History of Enterprising Women (London: Constable; 2002), pp. 63-66, 98-106. All have useful references and bibliographies.

Liverpool or London in Britain, and finally back across the North Atlantic to turn southwest off Newfoundland's Grand Bank and cruise back home. If this global frontier has a limit, it is a temporal one: once trade routes were established and the last stretches of ocean had been explored and charted, so as to become part of humanity's common patrimony, this heroic stage of the Ocean frontier ended. Thereafter, economic exploration and exploitation followed but, beyond the limits of the recently created (1982) national "exclusive economic zones" (EEZs),<sup>146</sup> Ocean remains as nearly as boundless and chaotic as ever.<sup>147</sup>

Secondly, although this Oceanic frontier's "heroic" or "pioneer" stage, like Turner's line of settlement, may have "closed" by the early 1900s, most seamen and fishers have long continued to be *de facto* frontiersmen. This is because they still inhabit "an edge of settlement" merely by virtue of living along the coast, the edge of land. Not only is further settlement in the seas beyond this line impossible, but the shoreline "as frontier" never closes, although its configuration does change, but usually only slowly. As for the Ocean as such, at least until recently, its nature seemingly remained largely unchanged and as Carson had suggested, seemingly unconquerable.<sup>148</sup> A half-century later, others

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The EEZ is briefly defined in I.C.B. Dear and Peter Kemp, eds., The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University; 2005, 2006), pp. 193-194, and more extensively in D.M. Johnston, The Theory and History of Ocean Boundary-Making, pp. 82-94.

<sup>147</sup>

See William Langewiesche, The Outlaw Sea: A World of Freedom, Chaos, and Crime (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux/North Point Press; 2004).

<sup>148</sup>

R. Carson, The Sea Around Us [1951], reprint, intro. Robert D. Ballard; afterword Brian

argue that this is still the case. “Some shores have been tamed, however temporarily,” remarks one recent commentator, “but beyond the horizon lies a place that refuses to submit.” Here is “the wave maker, an anarchic expanse, the open ocean of the high seas,” with “its many names, and...variations in color and mood.” He, too, stresses that geographically, the ocean is by far our planet’s “greatest defining feature,” but adds that

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J. Skinner (Oxford: Oxford University; 2003), p. 19. Three decades later M. Gill put it more simply: “No man commands the sea.” But he added this warning: “Our very success is putting the oceans in jeopardy: the dangers of exploitation are already with us” since “we need the waters of the world in order to exist, and we need their fish and minerals and energy for our well-being;” see his Introduction to Clare Francis and Warren Tute, The Commanding Sea [Six Voyages of Discovery] (London: British Broadcasting Corporation with Pelham Books; 1981), p. vii.

In retrospect, it seems that at present, pollution and over-exploitation are closing many aspects of the oceanic frontier in general, just as the virtual destruction of North Atlantic cod stocks finally ended Newfoundland’s historic “fishing frontier” in the 1980s-1990s. As late as 1984 an official Canadian government report on pollution still unhesitatingly concluded “that the offshore Northwest Atlantic is relatively uncontaminated;” R.C.H. Wilson and R.F. Addison, eds., Health of the Northwest Atlantic (Dartmouth, NS: Environment Canada and the Bedford Institute of Oceanography; 1984), p. 174. Matters changed, however, as the dragger fleet’s expansion continued virtually unchecked until 1988 and the fishery collapsed. This and other allied developments are detailed in Pol Chantraine, The Last Cod-Fish: Life and Death of the Newfoundland Way of Life, trans. Kathé Roth (Montreal, PQ and Toronto, Ont.: Robert Davies Publishing; 1993); Ragnar Arnason and Lawrence Felt, eds., The North Atlantic Fisheries: Successes, Failures and Challenges (Charlottetown, PEI: Institute for Island Studies; 1995); Craig Palmer and Peter Sinclair, When the Fish Are Gone: Ecological Disaster and Fishers in Northwest Newfoundland (Halifax, NS: Fernwood Publishing; 1997); Michael Harris, Lament for an Ocean. The Collapse of the Atlantic Cod Fishery: A True Crime Story (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart; 1998; and, most recently, Charles Clover, The End of the Line: How Overfishing Is Changing the World and What We Eat (New York: The New Press; 2006), as well as Callum Roberts, The Unnatural History of the Sea (Washington, DC: Island Press-Shearwater Books; 2007). A brief review of the most recent developments and the associated American political environment in the last year of the Bush Administration is Rick Martin, “Fisheries and Aquaculture: Current Political Climate Worrisome,” Sea Technology, 49 (January 2008), No. 1, pp. 32-33.

it has great political and social significance as well – not merely as a wilderness that has always existed or as a reminder of the world as it was before, but also quite possibly as a harbinger of a larger chaos to come.” For at a time “when every last patch of land is claimed by one government or another,” one commentator recently noted, “and when citizenship is treated as an absolute condition of human existence, the ocean is a realm that remains radically free,” a situation highlighted by the some 40,000 “large merchant ships that wander the world with little or no regulation...”<sup>149</sup>

There is, of course, nothing new in this last phenomenon. This is because the maritime frontier, unlike those on land, is as remarkable for the stability of its overall characteristics as it is for its tradition of independent shipowners and seafarers.<sup>150</sup> Indeed,

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William Langewiesche, The Outlaw Sea, p. 3. While Michael Gill and others warned in the early 1980s of the dangers created by our success in exploiting the Ocean, they still placed great hopes on “the conclusion of the world’s negotiations on the Law of the Sea, the most comprehensive international legislation ever attempted.” This, they believed, was “likely to be crucial in man’s long relationship with the commanding sea;” Introduction to C. Francis and W. Tute, The Commanding Sea, p. vii. But while this agreement was concluded at Montego Bay, Jamaica, on 10 December 1982, many industrial nations held aloof, and the treaty only took effect in November 1997. Yet as Langewiesche’s comments indicate, it has yet to have the full beneficial impact expected by Gill and others; see Richard Ellis, Encyclopedia of the Sea (New York: Alfrd A. Knopf; 2001), p. 188, and for an exhaustive review of all relevant issues under the existing regime, Edgar Gold’s massive Gard Handbook on Protection of the Marine Environment, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Arendal, Norway: Gard AS; 2006), as well as the monthly “Environmental Monitoring” and other reports in the journal Sea Technology (Arlington, VA: Compass Publications), 49 volumes to date (2007).

<sup>150</sup>

D. Sekulich, Ocean Titans, pp. 60-68. But given increased regulation, and such technical means of observation as satellites, there is substance to one contemporary owner’s comment that apart from the limits imposed by the sea itself, “someone is always watching us;” Ibid., p. 67.

even with the adoption of sails and steam power, until the massive application to the oceans of modern technologies in the mid-1900s, “the defining dimensions” of the seafarer’s world in many respects had remained “largely unchanged since the first separation of earth and water.” For throughout our history, Robert Foulke points out, the sea – unlike the land – “has been a constant for those who sailed on it, variable in mood but immutable in essence – a place with a character much like that attributed to Poseidon, by turns placid and turbulent, serene and menacing.”<sup>151</sup> And however successful were history’s mariner-frontiersmen, along with their supporting home-port communities, in exploring its farther reaches and exploiting its many resources, they never forgot that the ocean was a capricious and powerful ally. Turning suddenly angry and deadly, it often destroyed not only ships with all hands but, on occasion, even their home havens. Small wonder that they viewed it, and often still do, as both “friend and foe,”<sup>152</sup> and personified the sea as a living god with attendant spirits, all of whom deserved propitiation and worship.<sup>153</sup> After all, as one English poet warned four centuries

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Robert D. Foulke, “Odysseus’s Oar: Archetypes of Voyaging,” in Daniel Finamore, ed., Maritime History as World History (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida; 2004), p. 200.

<sup>152</sup>

N. Gorsky, The Sea – Friend and Foe, trans. S. Apresyan (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House; 1961). Italics added.

<sup>153</sup>

Michael Stammers, “Sailing-Ship Seafarers and Sea Creatures,” in Stephen Fisher, ed., Man and the Maritime Environment (Exeter: University of Exeter; 1994), p. 144. Like other “enlightened” rationalists, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), brother of eminent naturalist and traveler Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), sought to combat such maritime superstitions. “The sea has been called deceitful and treacherous,” he wrote, “but there lies in this trait only the character of a great natural power, which



ago, the “wretched swains, that live the fishers’ trade” were at constant risk “[t]hat being fishers, thus were fishes made.”<sup>154</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that at sea, as on land, the frontiersman has remained a potent image in Western culture. Recently, its symbolic power was confirmed by the use of “frontier” by the French structuralist-anthropologist Francois Hartog. In his recent study of Homer’s *Odyssey*,<sup>155</sup> he examines the accounts of Greek travellers from Ulysses to the neo-Pythagorean Apollonius of Tyana as “guides to a cultural history or an anthropological exploration of ancient Greece and its sense of identity.” To this end, Carol Dougherty explains, Hartog “focuses on the rhythm or regular movement created by these men of travel between notions of the same and of the other within Greek culture.” In so doing he concerns himself with travel as being “what he calls a ‘discursive operator’ or narrative scheme – in particular, insofar as the notion of travel

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renews its strength, and, without reference to joy or sorrow, follows eternal laws which are imposed by a higher power;” Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), quoted in Tyron Edwards, D.D., comp., A Dictionary of Thoughts being A Cyclopaedia of Laconic Quotations from the Best Authors of the World, Both Ancient and Modern (Detroit, MI: F.B. Dickerson; 1908), p. 507. Despite such comments, superstitions remain alive and well in today’s maritime community.

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Phineas Fletcher (1582-1650), “Chromis,” in Herbert Read and Bonamy Dobree, comp., The London Book of English Verse, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode; 1952), pp. 158-159. He also warned (p. 157) that fish were already being poisoned by man’s waste so that the “dead pollute the seas with venom’d stink.” While his dialogue was intended as a religious allegory, it presented its message by highlighting the real plight of contemporary fishers.

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Francois Hartog, Mémoire d’Ulysse: récits sur la frontière en Grece ancienne (Paris: Gallimard; 1966).

functions as the resolution or response to a problem.”<sup>156</sup> In this case travel is in itself operating as “a prominent figure for the process of gaining knowledge about both others and about the self.” This means that the travellers are conceived of not so much as intellectual pioneer-settlers, but rather as frontiersmen-explorers. Thus Hartog calls them explicitly hommes-frontieres, translated by Dougherty as “men of boundaries,” since they are “men who take themselves to the borders, who embody the boundary-mark and yet remain mobile.” He seeks to examine the way in which such voyagers are “intermediary figures, operating on both sides of a border” or frontier. By traversing these boundaries, they “come to represent the very point of demarcation” while providing “an itinerary of their own cultures.” In this manner Ulysses (Odysseus), as what I will call a “maritime-frontiersman,” in his wanderings “traces the contours of Greek culture” and marks its boundaries. Or as Dougherty puts it, “he travels to the extreme limits of the Greek experience, right to the point of no return – to the underworld, the land of the Lotus-Eaters, the island of Circe.”<sup>157</sup>

If one accepts the conclusions of one recent critic of Turner, our seafarer may have a greater claim to the title of frontiersman than does the Western pioneer. In his latest study Andro Linklater insists that the “basic flaw in Turner’s argument was there at its starting point.” Rejecting the latter’s view that the American frontier was unique because

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This account of Hartog’s “man of the frontiers” (or of the “boundaries”) is based Carol Dougherty’s summary in her The Raft of Odysseus: The Ethnographic Imagination of Homer’s *Odyssey* (Oxford: Oxford University; 2001), pp. 5-7.

<sup>157</sup>

Ibid.

of “the freedom of the wilderness,” Linklater argues it was distinguished instead by “the lines drawn on previously uncharted ground – around claims, properties, states, and the republic itself,” and insists this is equally the case with regard to such “new frontiers” as intellectual property, the Internet and, perhaps somewhat strangely, space. “So far from being hostile to the individual,” he insists that in all these cases it is government that has “made it possible for the individual to gain due reward for his or her enterprise.”<sup>158</sup> If one admits that the drawing of such “lines” (or passing of laws) may indeed accurately best describe processes on the Western Frontier, or those with regard to patents and the Internet, this is clearly less so in the realms of Outer Space or the high seas.<sup>159</sup> For however we regard space, with regard to Ocean we have seen that despite the law of the sea treaty adopted in 1982, the “drawing of lines” and reduction of chaos on the oceanic frontier is far from being “a done deal.” Consequently, the maritime frontiersmen clearly operates in a real realm of freedom that accords well with Turner’s description, whether justified or not, of the American West.

### **The Oceanic Frontier: A Symbiotic Union**

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Andro Linklater, The Fabric of America: How Our Borders and Boundaries Shaped the Country and Forged our National Identity (New York: Walker and Company; 2007), p. 257.

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Declared “the province of all mankind” by the Outer Space Treaty of 1967, this is a realm commonly compared to Ocean in terms of such issues as possible resources and, significantly, the problems of establishing recognized frontiers; J.E.S. Fawcett, Outer Space: New Challenges to Law and Policy (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1984), pp. 1-7, 16-19. The problems of defining frontiers and otherwise regulating space are discussed from another political viewpoint in A.S. Piradov, ed., International Space Law, trans. Boris Belitsky (Moscow: Progress Publishers; 1976), chapters 1-4.

The composite but integral aspect of the Oceanic frontier underlines a third basic difference between this latter and its continental-land counterparts. This is the bifurcated nature of the former, which is divided into the wide Ocean Sea over which seafaring frontiersmen make their way, and the coastal strip – what Newfoundlanders call the “landwash” – which nurtures and prepares them for their journeys, and to which they return when these are finished.<sup>160</sup> For maritime activities early promoted the growth of the shore-based infrastructure of coastal communities, which always has existed in a state of symbiotic union with the Ocean itself. This coastal base, in turn, has included the host of other associated professions such as boatbuilders, riggers, instrument-makers, cartographers, blacksmiths, merchant-venturers, and so on, as well as such less respectable livings earned by smugglers and the so-called “wreckers,” whose survival also has depended upon the Oceanic frontier. But it is again worth stressing that despite changing technologies and shifting social-economic and political environments, one element has remained constant: the unbounded, unconquerable and often dangerous nature of the sea, the “physical punishment that work at sea inflicted on those who escaped death’s axe,” and the toll the Ocean has always taken in life and property both

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This bifurcation is reflected in the two meanings of the term “maritime.” In the first place, it refers to the world of the sea and to such associated topics as navigation, shipping, trade, naval matters, and so on (for example, “maritime law,” “maritime trade,” “maritime affairs,” a “maritime environment,” etc.). But secondly, the term also describes regions bordering the sea or people living by or near the sea (for example, Canada’s “Maritime Provinces” and “Maritimers,” France’s Maritime Alps, etc.); see Daniel Vickers with Vince Walsh, Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 2005), pp. 1-4.

from those frontiersmen who sail out upon it, as well as on those lining the coasts who prosper or suffer disaster through their efforts.<sup>161</sup>

Clearly, then, both Ocean and its associated coasts are elemental components of the larger Ocean Frontier. Although divided by their differing physical natures, they yet are united in their symbiotic embrace through the shoreline. Based on the tidal lines, this last forms a boundary or border, or rather a border zone, beside which arose the communities which support and nourish a mobile and often temporary population of seafarers. Since these latter can cross and use the seas, but never settle them, this chain of coastal communities – be they the Aegean’s Cycladic harbours, England’s medieval Cinque Ports or the North Atlantic’s later “outports” – becomes a “jumping-off point.” As such, it has a symbolic and emotional significance far surpassing any mere line of settlement or fortified military posts, one that makes most coastal communities into something more than economic metropolises or way-stations. True, when passing the Appalachian mountain or Mississippi-Missouri river lines, the explorers and settlers of the Western Movement often entered an uncertain, dangerous and even unknown territory. But this said, the new territory remained terrestrial and so usually shared many if not most of the physical characteristics and properties of the known world the pioneers had left behind. But when the seafarer, the maritime frontiersman, crosses the shoreline (or in practice, steps from the wharf or goes up the gangway), he makes a transition to another physical realm with its own unique sense of isolation, dangers and rewards. And in each case the

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<sup>161</sup>

Ibid., chapter 5 (quote p. 161).

fact that their contrasting environments had differing impacts on the attitudes, codes of conduct and, many believe, the views of the world of their respective frontiersmen seems obvious.

For example, one major aspect of the seaman's outlook is his consciousness of existing in two worlds, a consciousness that underlies the whole of maritime literature. "Writing about seafaring is loaded with dichotomies between the sea and the land," writes Robert Foulke,

and among them, in voyage narratives, the strongest polarity is the impulse to sail outward set against the desire to return home. Such ambivalence is as unstable as the sea itself, and its currents can flow either way. Odysseus's voyage follows the ancient Greek pattern of the nostos, or 'return.' Yet most of his adventures and disasters come from the opposite impulse, an insatiable curiosity and brashness that leads him into trouble time after time.<sup>162</sup>

And indeed, the drive to leave the land, to go adventuring or labouring upon the high seas, followed by the countervailing dream of returning "home," to land, appears as a constant theme in seamen's attitudes as well as the literature, folklore, music, and studies of seafaring. And when comparing the similarities and contrasts between the land-bound frontiersman with his seafaring counterpart, it is in dichotomies such as this that the differences between the "landsman-farmer" and "boatman-sailor" become most evident.

In any case, given that Ocean is itself unconquerable and incapable of sustaining human settlement, it obviously is left to the associated coastal regions and fringes of this

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<sup>162</sup>

R.D. Foulke, "Odysseus's Oar: Archetypes of Voyaging," p. 184.

bifurcated frontier to provide an environment more friendly to human endeavours. Yet given the relationship of coastal dwellers to seamen and the seas, they too are often very different from their rural farming cousins of the interior. Yet the reputation of coastal dwellers is more mixed than often realized. On the one hand, there are the citizens of the great mercantile and naval ports of the world which serve as entrepôts of ideas as well as goods, which are often regarded as centres of commercial, technological, and cultural wealth and progress, and which are famous for their teeming, cosmopolitan waterfronts and dock areas, commonly known as “sailortowns.” During the Age of Sail these last were legendary, and were found in every major port from London to Liverpool, Amsterdam and Hamburg to Halifax, Boston and New York in the west, and Singapore and Canton in the Far East. In each a sailor found the taverns, bordellos, boarding houses, missions, and other facilities which restored him after a long voyage before the mast, along with the tricksters and crooks who sought to relieve him of his wages and, when they succeeded, agents anxious to sign him up for his next voyage.<sup>163</sup>

Below these great oceanic centres were numerous middle-sized commercial, whaling and fishing ports which formed “sailortowns” in their own right, and in which every family had some connection or other to the sea. Such, for example, were Salem and Nantucket

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The great port districts of this period are described in Stan Hugill, Sailortown (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul/ E.P. Dutton; 1967). Those along the American seaboard are sketched in Robert Carse, Ports of Call [The Great Colonial Seaports] (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons; 1967), while their counterparts in Eastern Canada receive serious critical scrutiny in Judith Fingard, Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1982).

in Melville's New England, or Nova Scotia's Yarmouth and Lunenburg.<sup>164</sup> Like the major metropolises, even these secondary ports served as centers for disseminating new ideas from around the world, but they were not necessarily typical of most of the numerous smaller coastal communities found clinging to the Ocean's rim since the dawn of history. Change usually was long coming in the lives of those at sea, and this was equally true for inhabitants in most of the Atlantic's tiny outports. Here Robert Louis Stevenson's reflections on his grandfather's experiences in building lighthouses on Scotland's Northern Isles are pertinent. Furthermore, since they describe a world which we usually ignore, and attitudes we now abjure, his comments deserve to be quoted at length.

These islands "are farther from London than St. Petersburg," he wrote in 1893, and "seem inaccessible to the civilization of to-day, and even to the end of my grandfather's career [1833] the isolation was far greater." Then there was no postal service whatsoever in the Long Island, while the keepers stationed at the Barra Head light had to send "for letters as far as Tobermory, between sixty and seventy miles of open sea." Similarly, the "Shetland ports," the condition of "which had surprised Sir Walter Scott in 1814, remained unimproved" by the time of his grandfather's report of 1833, even though the archipelago had 30,000 inhabitants and had seen a seven-fold increase in trade over the two decades since 1813. Despite this, "the mails were despatched and received by chance coasting vessels at the rate of a penny a letter; six and eight weeks often elapsed

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<sup>164</sup>

D. Vickers with V. Walsh, Young Men and the Sea, pp. 132-136.



between opportunities, and when a mail was to be made up, sometimes at a moment's notice, the bellman was sent hastily through the street of Lerwick." And although Shetland was a mere seventy miles from Orkney, Stevenson's grandfather reported there was "no trade communication whatever."<sup>165</sup>

Having discussed the state of the isles in 1833, Stevenson turns to the situation when his grandfather first travelled there, forty-two years earlier. Then, he writes,

the barbarism was deep, the people sunk in superstition, the circumstances of their life perhaps unique in history. Lerwick and Kirkwall ... were but barbarous ports where whalers called to take up and return experienced seamen. On the outlying islands the clergy lived isolated, thinking other thoughts, dwelling in a different country from their parishioners, like missionaries in the South Seas. My grandfather's unrivaled treasury of anecdote was never written down ... and such as have been preserved relate principally to the islands of Ronaldsay and Sanday, two of the Orkney group. These bordered on one of the water-highways of civilization; a great fleet passed annually in their view, and of shipwrecks of the world they were the scene and cause of a proportion wholly incommensurable to their size....<sup>166</sup>

In this description Stevenson errs only in suggesting that the position of these archipelagos is "perhaps unique in history." Not only are similar descriptions of parallel situations found in nineteenth-century Cornwall in England proper, but folklorists and other scholars have left like accounts of many other isolated coastal regions along both

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<sup>165</sup>

Robert Louis Stevenson, Records of a Family of Engineers, in C.C. Bigelow and T. Scott, The Works of Robert Louis Stevenson, X: Familiar Studies, A Family of Engineers and an Essay on Stevenson, pp. 296-297. On the career of Stevenson's grandfather, Robert Stevenson, as a designer, builder and the inspector of Scotland's lighthouses, and his family's overall contribution to this work, see Sharma Krauskopf, Scottish Lighthouses (Belfast: Appletree Press; 2001), pp. 19-24.

<sup>166</sup>

R.S. Stevenson, Records of a Family of Engineers, p. 297.

sides of the North Atlantic frontier.

In part because of their isolation, but also due to the unique nature of the immediate tidal zones, within the coastal regions the lines of bifurcation – the shore line with its beaches and associated tidal and wind regimes – such regions have their own environments and mystique, as well as similarities. For many cultures these zones, and especially the actual tide-lines, were much more than simple demarcations between land and sea. Rather, they have been borderlines endowed with their own atmospheres of mystery and even magic,<sup>167</sup> as well as places of de facto exile for men like the unfortunate Peter Grimes.<sup>168</sup> At the very least, the crossing of this line or zone takes the mariner from one physical world to another, from the ordinary world of dry land, of the expected, and of the possibility of warmth and comfort, to the “hostile environment” of that other world of frigid water, miserable living conditions, esoteric knowledge, startling adventures and, just possibly, contact with the extra-natural realms that co-exist with our own world of the everyday.<sup>169</sup> And it is just this possibility that led many

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See, for example, the stories of the German writer Theodor Storm, The White Horseman and Beneath the Flood, trans. Geoffrey Skelton (London: New English Library; 1962).

<sup>168</sup>

Although best known from Benjamin Britten’s opera of this name, the unfortunate Grimes was first the subject of George Crabbe’s (1754-1832), “Peter Grimes,” first published in The Borough (1810); see V.H. Collins, comp., A Book of Narrative Poetry, With Remarks on Narrative Poetry by Edmund Blunden, rev. ed. (London: Oxford University; 1963. 1970), pp. 138-148.

<sup>169</sup>

Indeed, some argue that it is the hostility of this environment that makes “the decision to work and live” upon the ocean strike “most of us as something that ought to be explained;” see D. Vickers with V. Walsh, Young Men and the Sea, p. 1.

coastal cultures to endow shorelines with symbolic or “ritual” values, aspects and even structures.<sup>170</sup>

Above we noted that like other groups (miners or soldiers), whose lives involve working in uniquely dangerous environments, seamen have seen themselves as comprising a distinct professional community. Furthermore, when writing about the Black Sea, Charles King describes a frontiersman as a “boundary-crosser.” This term clearly is particularly apt when applied to oceanic mariners or seafarers, and adds to their sense of group identity. By the very nature of their work, sailors continually cross bodies of water that serve as geographical boundaries between continents as well as political borders between states. But bearing our comments on the nature of shorelines in mind, it seems equally clear that the mere act of going to sea can be seen to involve traversing the boundary between the physical realms of land and sea. As just noted, for many people in different places and different times, this also has meant crossing what some call a “liminal” boundary between the natural and supernatural worlds. It is the task, or perhaps the fate, of the maritime-Oceanic frontiersman that if he survives, he will cross over, or through, this “liminal portal” or border repeatedly as he moves back and forth between

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See, for example, Christer Westerdahl’s essays, “The Ritual Landscape at Sea,” in K. Krueger and O. Cederlund, eds., Maritime Archaeology Today: 3<sup>rd</sup> International Marine Archaeological Conference of the Baltic Sea Area (Rostok, 2002), 51-72; “Seal on Land, Elk at Sea: Notes on and Applications of the Ritual Landscape at the Seaboard,” The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology, vol. 34 (April 2005), No. 1, pp. 2-23. He points out that labyrinths or mazes are typical of the “ritual landscape” structures on many European coastlines. On these last, for example, see Helen Raphael Sands, The Healing Labyrinth: Finding Your Path to Inner Peace, foreword Robert Ferre (New York: Barron’s Educational; 2001), pp. 30-31.

this world and an “otherworld.”<sup>171</sup>

Furthermore, because the sea cannot be “settled,” it must remain a constant, unchanging source of the unexpected, of mystery and frequently, of danger. This means that the realm of the seafarer differs from his frontiersmen counterparts of the American West and elsewhere.<sup>172</sup> Whereas they usually continued moving forward, leaving others to transform yesterday’s frontier with timber camps, mines and farmsteads, the successful seafarer must cross and recross the same liminal threshold of the shore – almost daily if he is an inshore fisherman, less frequently if he fishes offshore, and still more infrequently if he is a merchant mariner or naval sailor. In all these cases, this can not but affect the mariner-frontiersman’s “state of mind,” as Turner put it, or “consciousness” of the world beyond, as French philosopher Remi Brague recently

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On coasts as “liminal portals” to the otherworld see C. Westerdahl, “Seal on Land, Elk at Sea,” p. 2; Miranda Aldhouse-Green and Stephen Aldhouse-Green, Quest for the Shaman: Shape-shifters, Sorcerers and Spirit-Healers of Ancient Europe (London: Thames and Hudson; 2005), pp. 78-79, and Patricia Monaghan, The Encyclopedia of Celtic Mythology and Folklore (New York: Checkmark-Facts on File; 2003, 2004), p. 385. Westerdahl (p. 11) also explains the use of “limina” as follows: “Magic transitions between the opposites of sea and land could thus be described as liminal (Latin limen, liminis means ‘threshold’), but maybe there is an older significance as to our contrasts. The related Greek word o limnu, in its masculine form, means salt marsh and estuaries, but n limnu, feminine, with stress on the first instead of the second syllable, means ‘harbour’. An additional meaning would be ‘at the border’....” For the introduction of this term into contemporary physiological and social-anthropological discussions see Arnold van Gennap’s The Rites of Passage (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago; 1960), pp. ii, 18; and Victor Turner, The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University; 1979), pp. 94-130.

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On might argue that miners also make a transition from one world to another since when they enter the shaft, they can be seen as passing from this world to the “underworld.”

noted. The latter observes that “European space, in contrast to the American one,” had “natural frontiers” only in the west, but warns that even there “they are not always perceived as such.” For despite the capes named “the edge of the world” found in Cornwall, Brittany and Galicia, Brague points out that “one cannot speak so simply of the inhabited space: a country such as Portugal considers itself as more open to the Atlantic than limited by it,” and he concludes that Europe’s frontiers “are solely cultural.”<sup>173</sup>

In Brague’s sense, we can further consider the mariner to be a frontiersman precisely because he is “conscious” of belonging to a class of humans who dare to cross the liminal boundary of the shoreline, leaving the more comforting realm of dry land to face the perils of posed by Ocean, be it in treacherous coastal waters or on Byron’s unpredictable, timeless and seemingly endless “watery plain.” By so doing, these seafarers also bind their oceanic otherworld to the same coastal fringe that serves as their bridge to the ordinary world of the landsman. And they do so in such a way that most shore dwellers do not look inland, but are conscious of their own ties to Ocean as well. Like the New Englanders of Melville and Fernandez-Armesto, many inhabitants of coastal cities, towns and hamlets still hear the call of the sea, and long looked to Ocean for their material and emotional prosperity. In addition, throughout most of human history the two groups – seafaring frontiersmen and coastal dwellers – have been

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Remi Brague, Eccentric Culture: A Theory of Western Civilization, trans. Samuel Lester (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press; 2002), pp. 5-6.

conscious of a mutual dependency, of existing in what is essentially a form of symbiosis. For example, the fishers at sea depend on the fish-plant workers to process their catches for the market. These same plant workers, meanwhile, are often the wives and mothers of the men at sea, which means they also help provide the material as well as the emotional homes for the fishers as well. While this direct example is obvious, it represents only one of many ways in which coastal inhabitants are dependent on their seafaring fellows in a relationship of mutual dependence that, in essence, is a social-economic and spiritual-cultural symbiosis. And this, in turn, exists within the larger context of the continuing maritime-Oceanic frontier, the nature of which affects almost all aspects of the lives of sailors and coastal dwellers alike.

Finally, it is perhaps worth commenting further on the implications of my use of the terms “maritime-oceanic” and “maritime-coastal frontiers.” By this I am suggesting that the former – the “maritime-oceanic frontier” is only one aspect of a larger and overall “maritime” or “Oceanic frontier,” and that if the conception of that watery frontier of the “one big Ocean” described above is common to the coasts of all continents, so too are its internal subdivision into two such subsections. Hydrographically, it is tempting to draw the line between the maritime-coastal and maritime-oceanic along the division between the inner and outer zones of the relevant continental shelf, or perhaps between that shelf and the Abyss beyond. Yet in the end it is probably more useful to define the existence of these separate coastal and oceanic frontiers in terms of the range of activities of the mariner-frontiersmen involved. In other words, the division envisaged is between those who live by exploiting the resources of the actual shoreline, the near off-shore waters

and the coastal sea lanes on the one hand, and those who strike out on distant oceanic voyages for a variety of purposes on the other. Such a distinction, in fact, also exists in practice in that drawn between steering by means of “pilotage” as opposed to “navigation.” Put simply, whereas the first can be defined as “the art of getting a ship from one place to another ... in sight of land,” and the second – navigation – refers to the ability “of sailing from one port to another out of sight of land,” the skills required of each are obviously very different.<sup>174</sup> Consequently, this distinction has real analytical utility and unlike the shifting divisions and varying nomenclatures imposed on the seas and oceans that a maritime frontiersmen navigate, it is more than just another intellectual concept or “construct.”

At the same time, however, the line between the pilotage frontier and that of navigation, like the transition from off-shore waters to great Ocean beyond, often is blurred and far from obvious. So while both the similarities and differences between these two “sub-frontiers” remain worthy of attention, we must always remember that the larger maritime or Oceanic frontier, like Ocean itself, remains a unified whole. Consequently, the natural conditions of the “frontier” life at sea have their impact on the character and self-image of both coastal and distant sailors alike, and on the coastal communities and cultures from which they set forth and, with good fortune, eventually returns. This helps explain the gulf between the “boatman” and the “landsman” farmer,

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Alan G.R. Smith, Science and Society in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (New York: Science History Publications; 1972), p. 36.

and between coastal communities and those of the settled, rural interior, a gulf expressed repeatedly in the world's literature since the dawn of history. King rightly points out that the place of individual seas and oceans has varied in our historical narrative from period to period, but that the conditions facing those who sail upon them have been remarkably constant.<sup>175</sup> Or put differently, if political and cultural changes along the rim may transform the world from which the mariner comes, once at sea he faces the same, timeless physical dangers and psychological challenges as did his predecessors centuries, even millennia, earlier. Technological advances may mitigate these dangers, but they cannot eliminate them.<sup>176</sup> So while accepting King's warning of the dangers of imposing today's prejudices and perceptions into the past, we can also fully endorse his concluding thought that despite "the homogenizing categories used by outsiders ..., facing the water and embracing its multiplicities can still be a respectable way of living ones life."<sup>177</sup> For despite, or perhaps because of man's ability to exploit, and even denude, Ocean of its riches, seafaring remains a career that usually has offered the adventuresome both the risks and rewards found on other frontiers as well.

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<sup>175</sup>

C. King, The Black Sea, pp. 8-9.

<sup>176</sup>

For example, although mortality rates have fallen over time, British studies of 1885, 1934 and 2002 demonstrate that historically, in Great Britain, "merchant seafaring and trawler fishing have been the most hazardous occupation;" Stephen E. Roberts, "Hazardous Occupations in Great Britain," The Lancet, 360 (17 August 2002), p. 543.

<sup>177</sup>

C. King, The Black Sea, p.247.



**CHAPTER VI**  
**COASTAL COMMUNITIES AND THE OCEANIC FRONTIER**

Often I think of the beautiful town  
That is seated by the sea;  
Often in thought go up and down  
The pleasant streets of that dear old town,  
And my youth comes back to me.  
And a verse of a Lapland song  
Is haunting my memory still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I can see the shadowy lines of its trees  
And catch, in sudden gleams,  
The sheen of the far-surrounding seas,  
And islands that were the Hesperides  
Of my boyish dreams.  
And the burden of that old song,  
It murmurs and whispers still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the black wharves and the slips,  
And the sea-tides tossing free;  
And Spanish sailors with bearded lips.  
And the beauty and mystery of the ships,  
And the magic of the sea.  
And the voice of that wayward song  
Is singing and saying still:  
"A boy's will is the wind's will,  
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the bulwarks by the shore,  
 And the fort upon the hill;  
 The sun-rise gun, with its hollow roar,  
 The drum-beat repeated o'er and o'er,  
 And the bugle wild and shrill.  
 And the music of that old song  
 Throbs in my memory still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the sea-fight far away,  
 How it thundered o'er the tide!  
 And the dead captains, as they lay  
 In their graves, o'looking the tranquil bay  
 Where they in battle die.  
 And the sound of that mournful song  
 Goes through me with a thrill  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

\* \* \*

I remember the gleams and glooms that dart  
 Across the school-boy's brain;  
 The song and the silence in the heart,  
 That in part are prophecies, and in part  
 Are longings wild and vain.  
 And the voice of that fitful song  
 Sings on, and is never still:  
 "A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

\* \* \*

--- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882), "My Lost Youth," in Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, comp. and ed., The [New] Oxford Book of English Verse, A.D. 1250-1918, new ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1939, 1955), pp. 817-820.

Whatever one makes of Longfellow's romantic memories of his childhood, few would deny that coastal communities have an environment that is very different from most inland settlements. In my case, this is characterized by the smell of salt in the air, of fish on an east wind, and the mournful foghorns sounding throughout an autumn night.<sup>1</sup> But while I remember fondly wandering the docks with friends and watching palates of raw Malaysian rubber unloaded at a dim-lit dockside pier at three in the morning, as a child in wartime Halifax I quickly learned that there was a more deadly side to the Ocean, and that enemy sailors in deadly U-boats lurked in its depths. Put simply, some dinner guests at my parents' table sailed off into oblivion. And in light of the continuing symbiotic nature of the sea/coastal community relationship, it is hardly surprising to find that like the Ocean, the vessels sailed also can stir serious anxiety, as well as affection, in the hearts of the initiated. Speaking of sailors and their attitudes to their ships, the great sea writer Joseph Conrad observed that "there are ships where things do go wrong," ships which are recognized by seamen as being "good or bad, lucky or unlucky." But he also observed that even in the case of those ships "that bear a bad name, ... I have yet to meet one whose crew for the time being failed to stand up angrily for her against every criticism," and he cites the case of one which supposedly killed someone on each voyage made. Nonetheless, he recalls "that the crew of that ship were, if anything, rather proud

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Like the smell of Marcel Proust's celebrated madeleine cake, that of the salt sea air is often evocative, and even addictive, for the coastal dweller who has removed in-land. While living in central London in the late 1930s, my mother once traveled three hours by tube, trolley and foot to sit on a Southend dock and smell the sea.

of her evil fame, as if they had been an utterly corrupt lot of desperadoes glorying in their association with an atrocious creature. We, belonging to other vessels moored all about the Circular Quay in Sydney, used to shake our heads at her with a great sense of the unblemished virtue of our own well-loved ships.”<sup>2</sup>

A moment’s reflection makes this ambivalence to both Ocean and boats perfectly comprehensible, and tells us much about the attitudes of coastal peoples to the seas, and to the ships that sail upon it. This is the subject British reporter Geoffrey Moorhouse’s demi-novel, demi-documentary entitled The Boat and the Town. Like Sebastian Junger’s later and better known The Perfect Storm,<sup>3</sup> Moorhouse concerns himself not just with the inter-relationships between Cape Cod’s fishers and the sea, but more directly with the ties between them and those left waiting on the shore. His view of this interrelationship is admirably summarized in the publisher’s blurb on the dust-jacket. “The Boat,” it reads

is the center of existence for those facing the hazards of their trade aboard or those anxiously waiting ashore for it to bring the men and their catch

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Conrad concludes by noting this vessel went ““missing’ ... after a sinister but, from the point of view of her owners, a useful career extending over many years, and, I should say, across every ocean of our globe. Having killed a man for every voyage, and perhaps rendered more misanthropic by the infirmities that come with years upon a ship, she had made up her mind to kill all hands at once before leaving the scene of her exploits. A fitting end, this, to a life of usefulness and crime -- in a last outburst of an evil passion supremely satisfied on some wild night, perhaps, to the applauding clamour of wind and wave;” Joseph Conrad, The Mirror of the Sea and A Personal Record, illus. Francis Mosley, intro. Jeffrey Meyers (London: Folio Society; 2005), pp. 40, 73.

3

Sebastian Junger, The Perfect Storm: A True Story of Men Against the Sea (New York: W.W. Norton; 1997). Also of note is the book of Linda Greenlaw, captain of the Hannah Boden, sister-vessel to Junger’s Andrea Gail, titled The Hungry Ocean: A Swordboat Captain’s Journey (New York: Hyperion; 1999).

safely back from the ocean fastness. The seasons change, but the patterns of this existence remain essentially the same. For those who see the Boat returning to the Town after a fortnight away at sea, to lie calmly at her moorings, it is difficult to understand what the voyage has meant for all those whose lives are bound to this small vessel: the anguish of those on shore who have waited through a terrible storm; the stupefying exhaustion of the fishermen who have been hauling and setting trawls in subzero cold on thrashing seas; the comradeship tested and the flaring tempers among close-quartered crew members; the sorrow at the loss of a crewmate to the engulfing deep.

There is anger shared by all when an oil slick spoils 270 miles of fertile fishing grounds, and a remote government agency dictates the politics of the sea. There is the piety that turns the town into a carnival on the Feast of St. Peter the Fisherman, and the longing that men and women have when they are separated by the sea. Above all, there is an abiding sense of wonder in the face of the vast, primordial sea.<sup>4</sup>

At the novel's end the heroine Ellen, the outsider, looks "across the Town, at its patchwork of wooden homes.... at the way it rose and fell around the harbor in its arms. It was a fruitful place and it had toughness in its soul...." But she tries "not to think of the sea just beyond, and the awful treachery it might reveal this day" – or any day.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Toll of the Oceanic Frontier**

This "awful treachery" is basic to the landlubber farmer's traditional distaste, not to say abhorrence for seafaring. The desert Arab Umar ibn al-Khattab, close companion of the Prophet Muhammad and second caliph (634-644), is quoted as expressing this eloquently when rejecting his Syrian governor's suggestion that the victorious Muslims build a fleet to carry their jihad into the Mediterranean. The caliph is said to have

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Summary on the inside flap of the dust cover of Geoffrey Moorhouse, The Boat and the Town (Boston: Little, Brown; 1979).

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Ibid., p. 275.

dreaded the ocean as “a boundless expanse, whereupon great ships look like tiny specks; nought but the heavens above and the waters beneath; when calm, the sailor’s heart is broken; when tempestuous, his senses reel. Trust it little, fear it much. Man at sea is an insect on a splinter, now engulfed, now scared to death.”<sup>6</sup>

When contemplating the Ocean, the coastal dweller recognizes full well the dangers and uncertainties posed by those characteristics of Ocean that repel the landsman. Indeed, this awareness and sense of impermanence is fundamental to the consciousness created by the social-economic and cultural symbiosis that exists between seafarers and the coastal communities that support them. That a fisherman’s or sailor’s parents, wife and children, friends and other relatives are tied to him economically, especially if they work in the fish plant that processes his catches, the shipyard that builds and services his vessels, invest funds in his enterprise, and so on. In reality, therefore, his death often meant economic ruin for his family and neighbours. Yet important as such a material cost might be, it hardly compares with the costs inflicted on parents like those of the Nova Scotian Benjamin Doane, whose family had already lost all three brothers to the sea, and his mother naturally shuddered when he himself set forth to make his way on the oceanic frontier.<sup>7</sup> Small wonder as well that the mother of the young outport

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Quoted from Al-Tabari, The History of the Prophets and Kings, in Sean Kingsley, “Saracan Seas, Early Islam, and the Death of Rome,” Minerva, 18 (November-December 2007), No. 6, p. 44.

7

Benjamin Doane, Following the Sea (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing/Nova Scotia Museum; 1987), p. 49.

Newfoundlander Arch Thornhill, responded to his enthusiasm for a career as a Grand Banks' fisherman with the simple and fatalistic statement: "My son, you will die."<sup>8</sup>

Outright shipwrecks aside, accidental death by water – fresh as well as salt – was a commonplace occurrence in the lives of most coastal dwellers. A summary of accidents in Nova Scotia's Yarmouth region for 1859, for example, records the drowning of three young men (aged 13, 17 and 20) while fishing from a small sailboat outside the harbour on 30 April; the death of an eight or nine-year-old son of a captain while sculling in the harbour on 16 August; the death of the second mate of a brig while mooring the vessel at the Long Wharf on 7 August; and the drowning of three other children in inland ponds and streams. Another child drowned in a similar fashion in 1860, along with a youth (20-years-old) who was transporting fish in the harbour in 1861, and so on.<sup>9</sup> Yet if this rate of individual fatalities would probably have been accepted as normal even in most inland communities of the day, the major disasters suffered by the coastal ports and outports undoubtedly had greater impacts on their inhabitants.<sup>10</sup>

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Raoul Andersen, Voyage to the Grand Banks: The Saga of Captain Arch Thornhill (St. John's, NFLD: Creative Publishers; 1998), p. 40.

9

J. Murray Lawson, comp., Yarmouth Past and Present: A Book of Reminiscences. (Yarmouth, NS: Author-Yarmouth Herald, 1902), pp. 428-431. Significantly, he devotes 63 pages (419-482) to the details of "accidents," on land as well as water, from 1831 to 1900, inclusive, but 75 pages (203-278) to "wrecks along the Western Shore" over this same period. In addition, during the mere 16 years 1884-1900 "disasters to Yarmouth shipping" alone take up another 49 pages (150-199).

10

Quite apart from the normal dangers of maritime life and those posed by storms such as the hurricanes discussed above, coastal dwellers are uniquely exposed to tidal waves or tsunamis, be it that which devastated Southeast Asia a few years past, that which

Needless to say, young maritime frontiersmen like Doane and Thornhill went to sea with a full knowledge of the toll taken by a treacherous Ocean, and of the risks they were running. Here the point is rather that not only did the inhabitants of their communities share in the human costs demanded by the oceanic frontier, but that in comparison with these costs, the losses suffered on America's celebrated Western Frontier pale in comparison -- at least as far as the non-aboriginal soldiers, miners, cowmen, and settlers are concerned. This is true of the toll taken both of the mariners seeking to use and exploit the seas, or just even of those landmen who simply sought to traverse the vast watery expanses of the ocean in search of new homes on some settlement frontier on a distant continent. This is evident from even a few selected instances or limited periods of time. At the celebrated Battle of the Little Big Horn of late June 1876, for instance, the Sioux destroyed General G.A. Custer and his column of 212-264 officers and men.<sup>11</sup>

Whatever its impact on the American psyche, as a disaster it hardly ranks with the Great

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supposedly destroyed mythical Atlantis, or that which killed 27 people and wrecked some 50 outposts on the Burin Peninsula – the great “South Coast Disaster” – in 1929; on Atlantis see Joel Levy, Lost Histories: Exploring the World's Most Famous Mysteries, (London: Vision Paperbacks; 2006), pp. 4-20; and on the tsunami of 1929, see Maura Hanrahan, Tsunami: The Newfoundland Tidal Wave Disaster (St. John's, NFLD: Flanker Press; 2004).

11

The figures on the size of Custer's force vary from reference to reference. Richard Morris, ed., Encyclopedia of American History (New York: Harper; 1953), p. 433, says the column had 264 combatants, but R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History from 3500 B.C. to the Present (New York: Harper; 1970), p. 906, reduces this number to 212. The impact of Custer's defeat on the American imagination recently has been reviewed in William M. Marshall III, The Day the World Ended at Little Big Horn: A Lakota History (New York: Viking-Penguin; 2007), and more generally, Michael A. Elliott, Custerology: The Enduring Legacy of the Indian Wars and Georger Armstrong Custer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago; 2007).



Storm of late November 1703 – a hurricane that unexpectedly swept across south England with winds of up to 80 miles-per-hour. The result was the death of some 8000 seamen, the destruction of the Eddystone lighthouse and, as chronicled by Daniel Defoe in The Storm (1704), of a multitude of shore dwellings. Of the dead sailors, 2000 were naval personnel, which number included the almost 1200 crewmen of the four ships-of-the-line driven on the Goodwin Sands. In fact, to this day this “gale” remains “the worst storm ever to hit the British Isles,” and it brought “the greatest single loss the Royal Navy has ever suffered, either in war or in peace.”<sup>12</sup>

The perils of a life at sea are highlighted further by figures on vessel losses. These show that during the war years of 1793-1799, Britain alone lost 2385 merchant ships at sea and another 652 wrecked on various coasts. As the kingdom’s shipping expanded, so too did the losses: in 1868 over 2500 ships were reported wrecked on British coasts alone. Furthermore, if life was dangerous for oceanic frontiersmen on the high seas, it was not less so for their compatriots – the maritime frontiersmen of the off-shore fisheries. A sudden storm that blew up in August 1848, for instance, caught some 900 boats working the waters off the Scottish coast from Wick to Peterhead. Unfortunately,

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J.A. Williamson, The English Channel: A History (London: Collins-The Readers Union; 1959, 1961), pp. 276-277; Bella Bathurst, The Wreckers: A Story of Killing Seas and Plundered Shipwrecks, from the Eighteenth Century to the Present Day (Boston; Houghton Mifflin; 2005), pp. 32-33. Brian Lavery, The Island Nation: A History of Britain and the Sea (London: Conway Maritime Press; 2005), p. 118. For another summary of this storm, as well as of Defoe’s account, see Scott Huler, Defining the Wind: The Beaufort Scale, and How a Nineteenth-Century Admiral Turned Science into Poetry (New York: Crown Publishers; 2004), pp. 49-63.

the tide was too low to permit entry into the shelter of Wick Harbour and 124 fishing boats went down. Again, a storm of October 1881 drowned 129 fishermen from the small Scottish fishing port of Eyemouth, and sixty-two men from elsewhere along the coast. In the light of such losses, one can understand why, as British naval historian Brian Lavery puts it, “only the great disasters hit the headlines, and many passed almost unknown.”<sup>13</sup> But when 240 British ships were lost and 500 lives lost in just three days in January 1843, Parliament at last felt it necessary to establish a select committee to study shipwrecks.<sup>14</sup>

The story was similar on the opposite rim of the Atlantic. All along the Eastern Coast of the United States, the shores of Canada’s Maritime Provinces and coasts of Newfoundland, shipwrecks were fully as frequent in Britain and Northwest Europe. Thus the treacherous ocean fronts of New Jersey and adjoining Long Island accounted for 338

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<sup>13</sup>

These figures are taken from B. Lavery, The Island Nation, p. 118. Again, an introduction to Britain for tourists makes note of the deserted and ruined village of Port Quin, near Tintagel on Cornwall’s northern, Atlantic coast, and explains: “One memorable night the little fishing fleet set sail, the glass dropped, the wind rose, and neither man nor fishing boat was ever seen again. The whole male population was wiped out.” The guide then adds that the “heavy toll ... levied on Cornishmen by the sea” is evident from the epitaphs on the granite tombstones in local churchyards. “Few of these fishermen die in their beds in spite of the magnificently heroic part played by those who man the life-boats;” Dore Ogrizek, ed., Great Britain: England, Scotland, and Wales (London and New York: Whittlesey House/McGraw-Hill; 1949), pp. 242-243. Fernand Braudel, The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, 2 vols., trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper, 1966, 1976), i, pp. 248-249, 252-253, and map on p.112, demonstrates that in an earlier period, shipping losses were similar in the inland sea.

<sup>14</sup>

Ronald Hope, Poor Jack: The Perilous History of the Merchant Seaman ((London: Chatham Publishing; 2001), p. 241.

vessels between April 1839 and July 1848.<sup>15</sup> When John Greenleaf Whittier spoke of the Saco River doing its work and “hurrying down to its grave, the sea,” he might well also have been referring to the grave of many of the residents of the town of that name, and of other Atlantic ports, as well as to the river itself.<sup>16</sup> Some estimate, for example, that some 5,000 wrecks lie on the ocean floor off the shores of Nova Scotia, or more than one for every mile of the province’s 4,625 miles of coastline.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, according to the records of the United States Life-Saving Services, over 250 Nova Scotian vessels were wrecked or otherwise disabled in American coastal waters during 1875-1914.<sup>18</sup>

Moving north, as many as 10,000 ships have been wrecked on the coasts of Newfoundland.<sup>19</sup> In particular, the history of that island’s seal fishery includes tragedies that still echo in the Newfoundland’s collective folk memory. The three worst --and best known – involved the loss of 48 sealers on the ice from the steamer Greenland in 1898,

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15

Kensil Bell, “Always Ready!” The Story of the United States Coast Guard (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co.; 1943), pp. 181-182. This figure represents 68 ships, 88 brigs, 30 barques, 140 schooners and 12 sloops.

16

John Greenleaf Whittier, “Mogg Megone,” in his Poems (New York: Hurst and Company; n.d.), p. 8.

17

Jack Zink, Ship Wrecks of Nova Scotia, 2 vols. (Hantsport, NS: Lancelot Press; 1975), 1, p. 9, and the lists of identified wrecks, with brief 3-4 line descriptions, for the years 1710-1785, pp. 173-226, and in volume 2 (1977), pp. 170-291.

18

John Victor Duncanson, Nova Scotian Vessels Shipwrecked or Disabled in United States Coastal Waters, 1875-1914 (Windsor, NS: West Hants Historical Society; 1997).

19

John Feltham, Northeast from Baccalieu (St. John’s, NFLD: Harry Cuff Publications; 1990), p. 4.

another 78 from the Newfoundland when they were caught on the ice by a blizzard in 1914, and 173 men when the Southern Cross disappeared with all hands in that same storm. All in all, during 1914 the seal hunt cost Newfoundland 253 men.<sup>20</sup> These figures may seem almost trivial when compared to the losses in the Great Storm of 1703 or some of the other British disasters mentioned above. Yet as in Scotland and Wales, they were still sufficient to devastate whole communities among the string of small, isolated outports that dotted the island's coastline. In 1898, for example, the 48 men lost from the Greenland were drawn from St. John's and 21 from other settlements. Of these latter, Newtown lost eight men, Harbour Grace six, Pool's Island five, and Safe Harbour, Greenspond and Cape Freels three each. In other words, over 50 percent of these outports suffered much more than others. Thus the capital city and Quidi Vidi lost two men each, and nearby Torbay only one, while the majority of the dead had come from Newtown and five other coastal hamlets. In some cases, two victims had come from a single family, which further reinforced the sense of disaster in the tight-knit outport society of that day. Thus the brother of George and Herbert Norris had boarded the Greenland from another sealing vessel to find, as reported in the St. John's Evening Herald, a "floating chamber of horrors," and to discover that "one of his brothers was found dead on the ice and the other was among the lost."<sup>21</sup> Again, in the case of the

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<sup>20</sup>

Guy Wright, Sons and Seals: A Voyage to the Ice (St. John's, NFLD: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Study No. 29; 1984), pp. 15-17.

<sup>21</sup>

Figures drawn from a table in John Feltham, Sealing Steamers (St. John's, NFLD: Harry

Southern Cross in 1914, Harbour Grace lost most heavily with 25 men missing, followed by the Kelligrews-Foxtrap area's 18, Spaniard's Bay's 13, Carbonear's 12, Brigus' nine, and Colliers' seven. In this case, as John Feltham notes, although the actual crew were drawn mainly from St. John's, both the captain and "the bulk of the sealers came from just a few towns at the head of Conception Bay." And once again, the families of a small group outports found themselves deprived of fathers, sons, brothers, uncles and fiancés.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic Britain's trawler fishermen faced similar dangers. Even though not all deaths were reported, so that mortality statistics are inaccurate, the death rate of trawler fishers was said to be ten times that of miners. Many fishing smacks were lost in storms, as was the case in September 1869 when six Hull vessels were caught off the Dutch coast in a sudden gale. Two collided and went down, and the other four were driven ashore on Heligoland. Numerous others perished when they were run down by larger ships, as occurred when the iron smack Ocean from Scarborough was hit by a steamer while fishing and lost two crewmen in March 1877. But even if the statistics are incomplete, they still present a bleak picture with the loss of at least 235

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Cuff Publications; 1995), p. 63. The quote from the Evening Herald (28 March 1898) is in Ibid., pp. 62-63.

<sup>22</sup>

Ibid., pp. 129-130. For the details of the other disaster of 1914, see Cassie Brown, Death on the Ice (Toronto, Ont.: Doubleday; 1972). Other general studies of the seal fishery include Briton Cooper Busch, The War against the Seals: A History of the North American Seal Fishery (Kingston, Ont. and Montreal, PQ: McGill-Queen's University; 1985); James E. Candow, Of Men and Seals: A History of the Newfoundland Seal Hunt (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites, Environment Canada; 1988); and Shannon Ryan, The Ice Hunters: A History of Newfoundland Sealing to 1914 (St. John's, NFLD: Breakwater; 1994).

fishermen from Grimsby – out of a total seagoing work force of some 4000 – between 1879 and 1882, and another 107 from Hull as well between 1878 and 1882.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly, modern technology seems to have done little to improve the situation, at least as compared with other ways of life, faced by those living from work on the maritime and oceanic frontiers. This is evident from an Oxford University study published in a recent issue of the British Medical Association's journal, The Lancet. This reported that in terms of fatalities, fishing and seafaring were the most dangerous possible occupations, and by very high margins. Specifically, seamen were 25 times, and trawler fishers 50 times more likely to die on the job than any other profession, miners and off-shore oil workers included. Again, if those employed in the ice industry during 1976-1995, inclusive, suffered 0.7 deaths, and construction workers braved 8.0 deaths per 100,000 "worker years," the figure for fishers was 103. Even more striking is the conclusion that if the absolute mortality figures are dropping in both maritime professions, this merely reflects a decline in the numbers of fishers and sailors engaged. In fact, the relative figures for fatalities has remained almost static since the first Royal Commission was set up to investigate shipwrecks in the 1830s.<sup>24</sup>

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Robb Robinson, Trawling: The Rise and Fall of the British Trawl Fishery (Exeter, Devon: University of Exeter; 1996), p. 69. The state of the English fishery at this time is detailed in F.G. Aflalo, The Sea-Fishing Industry of England and Wales: A Popular Account of the Sea Fisheries and Fishing Ports of Those Countries (London: Edward Stanford; 1904).

24

Stephen E. Roberts, "Hazardous occupations in Great Britain," The Lancet, 360 (17 August 2002), pp. 543-544.

Regardless of the scale of losses, the personal, social and economic impact of both continuing individual deaths, as well as the less frequent major disasters on small coastal communities can easily be imagined. Fishing (like all seafaring) may be dangerous, as an official of Britain's modern Maritime and Coastguard Agency recently explained, but it "is done by people who know that it's dangerous and therefore react differently.... Fishing is a controlled danger, it's an accepted danger...."<sup>25</sup> Perhaps so, and this may explain the fatalism and seemingly callous attitude to shipwreck victims that "come-from-aways" sometimes ascribe to many coastal dwellers. But it is equally callous to assume that these latter did not suffer when they lost their own. Indeed, we must remember that the symbiotic relationship between the two fundamental elements of the oceanic frontier – the frontiersman at sea and his coastal community at the rim – means that each lost vessel and fisher or seaman has a direct impact somewhere on the shore, and that by the 1850s the maritime losses in life of Britain alone were annually between 2000 to 3000.<sup>26</sup>

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Quoted in B. Bathurst, The Wreckers, p. 244. The official in question was the surveyor of fishing vessels for the Agency in the fishing port of Newlyn, on Cornwall's south coast between The Lizzard and Land's End.

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This estimate was cited in discussions of Great Britain's Coastguard Service Act of 1856, and between 1859 and 1909 that service is credited with helping save some 20,000 lives; "Coastguard service," Alan Isaacs and Jennifer Monk, The Cambridge Illustrated Dictionary of British Heritage (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 1986), p. 107. Some idea of the scope of Cornish life-boat and rescue efforts can be gained from the "service record" in John Corin and Grahame Farr, Penlee Lifeboat: A History of the Penlee and Penzance Branch of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (Penzance, Corn.: Penlee and Penzance Branch of the R.N.L.I.; 1983), pp. 113-119.

It is hardly surprising, then, that along with (and often within) the voyage narrative, shipwreck tales have been a recurring motif in the literature of oceanic adventure since Homer's Odysseus sailed home from Troy.<sup>27</sup> Not surprisingly Hesiod, the Greek proponent of a life on the land, discouraged seafaring and warned: "It is dreadful to die in the waves."<sup>28</sup> In spite of this advice, many Greeks took to the seas and, supposedly with less enthusiasm, the Romans felt condemned to follow them. As a result, by the end of the Classical Age the shipwreck motif had established a firm niche in our more general literature at all levels, a niche that expanded rapidly with the Age of Exploration after 1500.<sup>29</sup> Thus shipwrecks are central to the plots of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night and The Tempest, while in 1780 the latter was transformed, expanded and performed as

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For an instructive sampling of 29 such tales see Anthony Brandt, ed., The Tragic History of the Sea: Shipwrecks from the Bible to Titanic (Washington, DC: National Geographic Society; 2006). Such tales, of course, are not confined to Ocean and its seas, but are found in areas such as the Canadian-American Great Lakes as well; see, for example, Rev. John Ellis Currey, Sailors and Their Ships (Grand Falls-Windsor, NFLD: Robinson-Blackmore Publishing; 1999, 2000).

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He also counseled: "Do not put all your means into ship cargoes; leave the major part on shore...;" translations from Work and Days, in Richard Garnett, et al., eds., The Book of Literature: A Comprehensive Anthology (New York: The Grolier Society; 1922, 1923), vol. 3, p. 102.

29

Meanwhile, the early modern oceanic frontier off of the North American coast took its first literary victim in the person of Stephen Parmenius, a Hungarian-born poet and member of Humphrey Gilbert's Newfoundland expedition, who went down with the Delight at the end of August 1583; see David B. Quinn and Neil M. Cheshire, ed. and trans., The New Found Land of Stephen Parmenius: The Life and Writings of a Hungarian Poet, Drowned on a Voyage from Newfoundland, 1583 (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1972), and R.K. Baehre, ed., Outrageous Seas, pp. 63-67.



a puppet spectacular entitled The Shipwreck.<sup>30</sup> By that date, of course, the device of the shipwreck had been used to maroon Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe on his desert island,<sup>31</sup> and to introduce Jonathan Swift's Gulliver to the land of Lilliput.<sup>32</sup> Again, some eight decades later (in 1788), the French writer Bernardin de Saint Pierre brought the romance between his star-crossed lovers, Paul and Virginia, to a tragic conclusion in a prolonged description of the destruction of the 700-ton vessel Saint-Geran by hurricane winds and seas off of the Isle of Amber on 24 December 1744. During this disaster, and before the eyes of her horrified shore-bound lover, the hapless heroine leaps from the doomed frigate into the tumultuous sea.<sup>33</sup>

### **The Origins of The Boat**

It is, of course, the boat that makes possible the existence of the bifurcated world of any maritime frontier, as well as that of the much vaster Ocean. Because of this, the antiquity of these frontiers of necessity reflects the antiquity of the vessels used in their

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Michael Dobson and Stanley Wells, eds., The Oxford Companion to Shakespeare (Oxford: Oxford University; 2001, 2005): p. 429. For those who don't wish to reread the actual plays, they also briefly summarize the plots of Twelfth Night (pp. 491-493) and of The Tempest, (pp. 470-4).

<sup>31</sup>

Daniel Defoe, The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, illus. Frances Brundage (Akron, OH: Saalfield Publishing; n.d.), pp. 28-31.

<sup>32</sup>

Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, "Great Books of the Western World," v. 36; 1952), 3-4.

<sup>33</sup>

See the excerpt from Bernardin de Saint Pierre's (1737-1814) Paul and Virginia (1788), trans. in Richard Garnett, et al., The Book of Literature, vol. 19, pp. 302-305.

exploitation. And despite the conservatism of archaeologists whose conclusions demand the proof of physical remnants, there is clearly nothing new in mankind's use of watercraft on the world's lakes and rivers, or even on the seas and oceans. For this purpose our distant ancestors used a variety of means, beginning with simple logs and rafts, a variety of balloon-like skin floats, and real boats made of reeds, dugout logs or greased animal hides stretched over bone or wooden frames. This range reflects the fact that the choice of materials naturally depended on local environments and resources. Thus skin or hide boats predominated in the northern Ocean; reeds along the Nile, lakes and similar locales; large dugouts in coastal regions with large trees in old growth forests; and so on. But overall, as one leading historian of ancient watercraft puts it: "There were seamen before there were farmers, and boatbuilders before there were wagon-makers," to which he adds that water transport may be "as old of mankind,"<sup>34</sup> even though the "earliest date when water transport was first used on lakes and rivers

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Sean McGrail, Ancient Boats and Ships (1983), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Princes Risborough, Bucks: Shire Archaeology; 2006), p. 50. Apart from McGrail's numerous other works, which include Ancient Boats in North-West Europe: The Archaeology of Water Transport to AD 1500 (London and New York: Longman; 1987, 1998) and Boats of the World from the Stone Age to Medieval Times (Oxford: Oxford University; 2001; rev. ed., 2004). Other standard treatments of early vessels include Basil Greenhill, The Archaeology of Boats and Ships: An Introduction (1976), rev. ed. with John Morrison (Annapolis, MD: US Naval Institute; 1995); Paul Johnstone, The Sea-craft of Prehistory (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1980); and Arne Emil Christensen, The Earliest Ships: The Evolution of Boats and Ships (London and Annapolis, MD: Brassey's-Conway Maritime/ US Naval Institute; 1996). A somewhat dissident view of the origins of boat construction is presented in Thor Heyerdahl, Early Man and the Ocean: A Search for the Beginnings of Navigation and Seaborne Civilizations (New York: Random House; 1978, 1980), pp. 3-26.

may never be known.”<sup>35</sup>

In large part our ignorance reflects the fact that, in most normal conditions, boat-building materials (reeds, wood, hides, and even bone) tend to disintegrate over time, and so vanish from the archaeological record. The world’s oldest surviving vessels are the pine logboat excavated at Pesse in Holland, and a similar craft found at Noyen-sur-Seine in France. These carbon-date at roughly 7200 and 6900 BC, respectively, and the future discovery of much older logboats is unlikely given the lack of appropriately sized trees in Europe before this period.<sup>36</sup> Elsewhere, recent finds of solidified bitumen fragments bearing impressions of ropes, reeds and, very occasionally, planks at Subiya in Kuwait on the Persian Gulf “have been interpreted as the remains of the waterproof outer layer of [reed] bundle boats and sewn-plank boats,” and the barnacles adhering to some indicate “that they had been in salt water.”<sup>37</sup>

Again, possible evidence of a much earlier skin boat, dating from the final phase of the last great Ice Age (9000-8000 BC), comes from Husum in Schleswig-Holstein. This is an antler “instrument from the Ahrensberg culture” which the German prehistoric boat specialist Detlev Ellmers identifies as “a fragment of a boat frame” that would have been

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<sup>35</sup>

Sean McGrail, “Rafts and Logboats,” in Brian M. Fagan, ed., The Seventy Great Inventions of the Ancient World (London: Thames and Hudson; 2004), p. 152.

<sup>36</sup>

Ibid., pp. 152, 155. McGrail, Boats of the World, pp. 172-173; P. Johnstone, Sea-craft of Prehistory, pp. 46-47; Jane McIntosh, Handbook to Life in Prehistoric Europe (New York: Facts On File; 2006), p. 184. The Pesse logboat was made by hollowing out and shaping a log. It is 9.8 feet (3 m) long and some 17 inches (44 cm) wide.

<sup>37</sup>

S. McGrail, Boats of the World, p. viii.

covered with animal hide.<sup>38</sup> Although his English colleague Sean McGrail considers this evidence to be “of doubtful provenance,”<sup>39</sup> he still agrees that our use of watercraft presumably must date from “well before 60,000 BC.” It was, after all, at that date or a little later that man reached Australia, which required “crossing 600 nautical miles [1100 km] of shark-infested sea strewn with islands.”<sup>40</sup> Thereafter, in his view, for “the boatman” the world’s rivers and seas were “as one: there are no barriers, for example, between Lake Geneva in Switzerland and the Yellow River in China.” Seafaring thus seems merely “a natural extension of voyages on inland waters, for before overseas exploration and settlement there was exploration and exploitation of the land by river and by lake.”<sup>41</sup>

McGrail is hardly the first to make this case, but the importance of seafaring for mankind’s history and cultural development is perhaps greater than even all this first suggests. In this last regard, one American social scientist points out that “[m]an is a technological animal and technological change is the fundamental factor in human evolution.” This, he insists, is “simply another way of saying that man is a cultural

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Detlev Ellmers, “The Beginnings of Boatbuilding in Central Europe,” in A.E. Christenen, The Earliest Ships, pp. 11-13.

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Sean McGrail, “The Bronze Age in Northwest Europe,” in Ibid., p. 24.

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Sean McGrail, “Rafts and Logboats,” p. 152, and his Ancient Boats and Ships, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p 8.

41

Sean McGrail, “Ships and Seafaring,” in Brian Fagan, ed., The Oxford Companion to Archaeology (Oxford and New York: Oxford University; 1996), p. 640.

animal” for whom “tools and cultures [are] central factors in his existence,” and only man “can consciously alter radically his physical environment....” At the same time, he admits “that technology sets limits to man’s activities and in a large measure defines his existence,” and that from the first “man has been dependent on technology; in fact, it could be argued that technology is what has made man man.”<sup>42</sup> For our purposes, this “Technological Man” had first to master our environment, rivers, lakes and the seas included, to the extent that we could use it for his own purposes. Yet equally clearly, in this effort our relationship with the seas and Ocean has remained technologically constrained (or even determined) in a practical sense, despite the utility in terms of food and other resources offered by our water world and, less materially, regardless of motives of intellectual curiosity.

If Ocean remains unmastered, we nonetheless have made considerable progress in exploiting its waters for our own ends. But our progress in exploring and harnessing the oceanic frontier – as in the case of the need for a plough capable of tilling the Great Plains in the mid-1800s – has depended on technological innovation. Thor Heyerdahl, the great, often intuitively driven Norwegian maritime scholar and pioneer, well understood this connection between man’s early technologies and his progress in using

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Victor C. Ferkiss, Technological Man: The Myth and the Reality (New York: George Braziller; 1969), pp. 27-29. A little further on (pp. 30-31) he insists that although “technology is fundamental to his humanity,” this “technology is more than toolmaking.” Rather, he suggests that “we think of technology as a self-conscious organized means of affecting the physical or social environment, capable of being objectified and transmitted to others, and effective largely independently of the subjective dispositions of personal talents of those involved.”

the waters. “Man hoisted sail before he saddled a horse,” Heyerdahl writes.

He poled and paddled along rivers and navigated the open seas before he traveled on wheels along a road. Watercraft were the first of all vehicles. With them the Stone Age world began to shrink. By hoisting sail or merely traveling with the current, early man was able to settle the islands. Territories that could be reached overland only by generations of gradual transmigration for those who had to confront obstacles like swamps and lifeless tundra, naked mountains and impenetrable jungles, glaciers and deserts could be reached in weeks by casual drift or by navigation. Watercraft were man’s first major tool for his conquest of the world.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, as Robert Foulke points out, our efforts to achieve this conquest have meant that the sea often was

the environment that has encompassed human beings during major movements of expanded awareness – the Greek colonization westward during the Archaic era; the Portuguese explorations of the South Atlantic, at first tentative then bold; the early Spanish voyages to the Indies and later ones to the Americas; Renaissance circumnavigations of the world; explorations of the Pacific during the eighteenth century; polar expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; and undersea exploration to profound depths of the ocean in recent decades. From The Odyssey to the present, the sea has served as a place for literary portraits of adventure, disaster, quests, hunts, and tests of human endurance.<sup>44</sup>

Or as another maritime historian remarks, man “was cradled on dry land, it was his birthplace. But the waters – the rivers and oceans – first nurtured that fragile plant, his civilization, and eventually carried it around the world.”<sup>45</sup>

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T. Heyerdahl, Early Man and the Ocean, p. 3.

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Robert D. Foulke, “Odysseus’s Oar: Archetypes of Voyaging,” in Daniel Finamore, ed., Maritime History as World History (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida; 2004), p. 200.

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Courtlandt Canby, A History of Ships and Seafaring (New York: Hawthorn Books;

### The Boat and Coastal Cultures

If Ocean has influenced our technology and culture, our maritime capabilities also have had considerable practical significance in their own right. For example, the “major movements” cited by Foulke were preceded millennia earlier by migrations that had a much more fundamental impact on the future of our race of human sapiens sapiens. Indeed, if we accept the “Noah’s Arc” or “Out of Africa” view of hominid evolution, our immediate predecessor – homo erectus – appeared in Africa c. 1.9 million years ago, but then soon expanded rapidly into Eurasia so that fossils from Java indicate his presence there from 1.8 million to 600,000 years. Modern humans came much later, appearing in the African Eden only c. 180,000 to 150,000 years ago, expanding into Asia a mere 100,000 to 50,000 years ago and, possibly due to an increasingly dry and unproductive climate, into Turkey and Europe, just 50,000 to 40,000 years ago.<sup>46</sup> And as “the

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1963), p. 9.

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The “Out of Africa” or “Noah’s Arc” theory was developed in France and has become generally dominant there and, more generally, in the United States. Brian M. Fagan outlines both this concept and the presumed course of these migrations in The Journey from Eden: The Peopling of Our World (London: Thames and Hudson; 1990), pp. 20-22, and updates this in Ancient Lives: An Introduction to Archaeology and Prehistory, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall-Pearson; 2000, 2004), pp. 233-282. The theory also is fully discussed in Christopher Stringer and Robin McKie, African Exodus: The Origins of Modern Humanity (New York: Henry Holt; 1997), and outlined further in Donald and Leonara Johanson, with Blake Edgar, Ancestors: In Search of Human Origins (New York: Villard Books; 1994), chapters 5-8; Juan Luis Arsuaga, The Neanderthal’s Necklace: In Search of the First Thinkers, trans. Andy Klatt (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows; 2002), pp. 45-62; Steve Olson, Mapping Human History: Discovering the Past Through Our Genes (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin; 2002), pp. 73-85, 123-163; the recent critiques of Marcel Otte, “Europe and Africa during the Paleolithic,” and Nicholas Rolland, “The Initial Peopling of Eurasia and the Early Occupation of Europe in Its Afro-Asian Context: Major Issues and Current

geographic expansion of human groups advanced,” writes one student of the Paleolithic, “so restrictive marine boundaries were encountered and overcome.”<sup>47</sup>

It may be an exaggeration to suggest that the maritime environment “encompassed” either of our ancestral groups in these long-past periods, but it still clearly was a major element in the narrative of their progress. The seas, observes one prehistorian, “do not seem to have prevented human expansion from Africa;” rather, they influenced “the manner in which migrations took place.”<sup>48</sup> Indeed, each of these primordial exoduses had its own distinctly watery component as it faced the above-mentioned barrier/highway paradox, not only in the form of the seas and Ocean, but also in the many rivers and lakes that cut and dot the Ocean-bound land masses. “Until post-medieval times,” writes Sean McGrail, “these lakes and rivers had imprecise boundaries and in wet seasons considerably extended their basins and channels.” So seas and the Ocean aside, from the first “man has had both to combat or to make use of these expanses of water to explore and exploit his environment, to extend his settlements and to colonise other areas, and to

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Perspectives,” in Sarah Milliken and Jill Cook, *A Very Remote Period Indeed: Papers on the Paleolithic Presented to Derek Roe*, eds., (Oxford: Oxbow Books; 2001), pp. 74-77, and 78-94, respectively; and Nicholas Wade, *Before the Dawn: Recovering the Lost History of Our Ancestors* (New York: Penguin Press; 2006), pp. 74-138, which presents recent DNA evidence and an interesting analyses.

<sup>47</sup>

M. Otte, “Europe and Africa during the Palaeolithic,” p. 74.

<sup>48</sup>

M. Otte, “Europe and Africa during the Palaeolithic,” p. 74. For more on recent theories of the oceanic nature of our ancestors’ early migrations, see the works cited above and Steve Webb, *The First Boat People* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University; 2006).



sustain trade and traveling later times.”<sup>49</sup>

This raises a second issue deserving of mention – that of trade. This activity, of course, is directly dependant on the availability and costs of transport technologies. Since these last were from the first “vastly cheaper” by water than by land, in our early history the “availability of water transport ... affected the viability of trade, particularly in bulky, heavy or low-valued goods...”<sup>50</sup> True, the building and use of watercraft did require considerable initial investments of time, effort and resources. But once waterborne operations – be they fishing, whaling, transporting goods, or even piracy – were underway, the profit margin rose considerably. As just noted, this was especially the case when it came to carrying cargo. In this regard the historical-geographer Edward Fox observes that when food was available along the way, land travel by people was “relatively simple,” especially after the domestication of horses, other draft animals and wheeled vehicles. Even so, the transportation of any quantity of supplies or goods remained “all but prohibitively difficult and costly.” With the initial investment made, however, water transport “provided a relatively cheap and easy means of moving goods in quantity, thus radically altering the geographical limitations on economic productivity and social organization.” In his view, the result “was a commercial, as distinguished

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S. McGrail, Ancient Boats and Ships, p. 8.

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Derek A. Welsby, The Kingdom of Kush: The Napatan and Meroitic Empires (London: British Museum Press; 1996), p. 170.

from an agricultural, society.”<sup>51</sup>

On our early maritime frontiers, such trading and commercial activities were obviously mounted and supported by same coastal communities which benefitted and battered from their proceeds, and in many cases they developed and shared what Filipe Fernandez-Armesto calls a “coastal culture.” At first sight his definition is deceptively simple: these are cultures “influenced more by the proximity of the sea than by other environmental factors.” He believes that the types of environment formed by this proximity have served as “nurseries of maritime civilization in small islands and [along] narrow coasts.” These would include any region where the sea appears to be “the dominant element, so far as the history of civilization is concerned, regardless of any feature of climate, except current and wind.” In his view, the number of maritime cultures and civilizations have been “far more extensive than commonly supposed,” and he suggests that a number of the world’s “great” civilizations which traditionally are analysed “in terms of their landward environment are better understood when reclassified as maritime.”<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, Fernandez-Armesto points out that even

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Edward Whiting Fox, History in Geographic Perspective: The Other France (New York: W.W. Norton; 1972), p. 34. For a fuller discussion of the advantages of water transport in trade see Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topic, The World That Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy, 1400 to the Present, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.(Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe; 2006), pp. 41-55 and the analysis in Michael Pearson, The Indian Ocean (London and New York Routledge; 2003), pp.28-31.

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Filipe Fernandez-Armesto, Civilizations (Toronto, Ont.: Key Porter Books; 2000), pp. x-xi; Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, “Maritime History and World History,” in D. Finamore, ed., Maritime History as World History, p. 9. In this regard he cites Ancient Greece, Japan and the Arabs (in the Indian Ocean), and insists that these examples could “be

“inland trading communities with no direct outlet to the sea are often deeply affected by the transmissions of culture and transfers of goods that reach them by way of the ocean.” Such was the case with early medieval Kievan Rus, where Viking traders brought the river system into touch with the remote sea lanes they frequented....”<sup>53</sup> All of this, of course, is advanced within the context of Fernandez-Armesto’s more general point that “environmental frontiers are critical,” that “civilizations thrive best when they straddle environments or occupy areas dappled with microclimates and with varied soils, reliefs and resources,” that a “people's proximity to and relationship with neighbouring cultures can transform or inform the life of a society,” and that civilization “is spread by human vectors....”<sup>54</sup>

Fernandez-Armesto himself makes clear throughout that coastal regions fall well into his category of an “environmental frontier.” If this view is accepted, we must note a final and crucial factor that promotes the rise of coastal cultures. This is the abundance of oceanic and litoral resources found at, or near, many shoreline sites, especially those in river estuaries where salt and fresh water meet. Before the advent of farming, these not only frequently sufficed to support expanding human populations, but they frequently also increased the possibility of creating more or less sedentary and

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multiplied.”

<sup>53</sup>

Ibid., pp. 9-22; also see the discussion in M. Pearson, The Indian Ocean, pp. 27-29, and of inland ports on rivers, 33-34.

<sup>54</sup>

F. Fernandez-Armesto, Civilizations, p. ix.

specialized coastal communities and, still later, full-fledged coastal cultures. Whatever the nature of the resulting society, since few today seriously dispute the antiquity of the “boatman,” most accept that from the first the seas, lakes and rivers served as highways for, rather than posing barriers to, human movement, transport and communication. From this it seems equally clear that our seaborne frontiers, along with their associated coastal communities, are of equal antiquity to any interior settlement frontiers. Indeed, they may well be older if McGrail and others are correct in concluding that “[a]lmost all significant water barriers were crossed at a remarkably early date,” proof that early man, “before he had domesticated animals, mastered agricultural and pottery skills, or constructed megaliths, ... was able to build and use water transport.”<sup>55</sup>

### **Early Maritime Coastal Communities**

The potential prosperity provided by coastal and oceanic resources – be they fish, seabirds or sea mammals – is evident from both archaeology and from a number of coastal cultures that persisted into the historic period. Along North America’s northwest Pacific coast, for example, a combination of riverine, shoreline and off-shore resources provided inhabitants with an abundance sufficient to support the leisure needed to elaborately decorate their dwellings, raise totem poles, and develop the ceremonial potlaches which validated a complex system of social ranks. These last both promoted an intricate system of exchange of precious goods as gifts over long distances, and

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S. McGrail, *Ancient Boats and Ships*, p. 8. While this might seem to overstate the case, many modern prehistorians, with less professional grist to mill, agree.

confirmed the existing social structure throughout this network. If wars over particularly rich fishing grounds were not unknown, relations between the communities involved “were mostly defined by potlatches to which leading personalities from far and wide were regularly invited.”<sup>56</sup> More interesting still is the rise of complex coastal societies based on the exploitation of sea mammals in the bleak Arctic coastscapes of eastern Siberia, the Aleutian Islands, Alaska and northern Canada. Studies of Inuit-Eskimo culture usually date the development of the techniques for successful whaling to about 800 AD. Then “skin boats large enough to carry a crew of eight men, and harpoons with detachable heads reliably attached to skin floats, [that] made it possible to pursue and kill even so large a creature as a wounded whale,” became available. During the summer migratory season, whales gather at particular points on the coast both north and south of the Bering Sea, and Inuit hunters concentrated at those where the currents, winds and coastline favoured their hunt. According to observations made during the 1700s, a single crew might expect to kill twelve or more whales per season. The meat then was frozen

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J.R. McNeill and William H. McNeill, The Human Web: A Bird's-Eye View of World History (New York: W.W. Norton; 2003), pp. 20-21. On this and other aspects of these societies see Peter Farb, Man's Rise to Civilization as Shown by the Indians of North America from Primeval Times to the Coming of the Industrial State (New York: E.P. Dutton; 1968), pp. 133-152; Diamond Jenness, The Indians of Canada, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Ottawa, Ont.: National Museum of Canada, Bulletin 65; 1963, 1972), pp. 139-148, 327-350; Brian M. Fagan's more recent Ancient North America: The Archaeology of a Continent, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Thames and Hudson; 2005), pp. 215-227, 233-244; and the essays in Tom McFeat, ed. and intro., Indians of the North Pacific Coast: Studies in Selected Topics (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart; 1966), 1969), especially Philip Drucker, “Nootka Whaling,” 22-27, and those in “Part Three: The Potlatch,” pp. 72-133.

and buried for preservation, and so sufficed to support some hundreds of their fellows (and their sled dogs) throughout the year, while the blubber served as fuel for cooking and lamps and the bone was used for tools. Other mammals – sometimes obtained by long-range trading relationships with caribou hunters – provided skins for boats and clothing. But it was the whale that became central to the Inuit lifestyle, and the boat captains who became leaders in Inuit society, within which their crewmen enjoyed special status as well.<sup>57</sup>

This Inuit whale-based culture was indeed efficient in exploiting the Arctic's resources and with various adaptations, it spread throughout the circumpolar world. However, its roots went back much further than the above discussion suggests, and it was initially based on seals rather than whales. "Human exploitation of pinnipeds [seals] goes back to the Pleistocene," concludes one recent study, and since the very early post-glacial or Holocene era, it has had increasing impacts on seal populations along the whole of the northeastern Pacific rim.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the Aleutian Islands themselves were

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J.R. McNeill and W.H. McNeill, The Human Web, p. 21. Robert McGhee, Ancient People of the Arctic (Vancouver, BC: UBC; 1996, 2001), pp. 121-126. Seal hunting on the Atlantic coast is discussed by Lisa Hodgetts, "Dorset Palaeoeskimo Harp Seal Exploitation at Phillip's Garden (Eebi-1), Northwestern Newfoundland," in Gregory G. Monks, ed., The Exploitation and Cultural Importance of Sea Mammals (Oxford: Oxbow Books; 2005), pp. 62-76, and more generally on the Dorsets, R. McGhee, Ancient People of the Arctic, pp. 135-148, and his The Last Imaginary Place: A Human History of the Arctic World (Oxford: Oxford University; 2005), pp. 44-55, 93-95, 116-124. Recent research into aboriginal trade routes in Alaska, stretching from c. 3000 BC to 1800 AD is reviewed in Steven McFadden, "New Technology Identifies Old Trade Patterns," American Archaeology, 11 (Winter 2007-2008), No. 4, p. 9.

<sup>58</sup>

D. Gifford-Gonzalez, S.D. Newsome, P.L. Koch, T.P. Guilderson, J.J. Snodgrass and

first settled c.7000-6000 BC, and inhabited continuously since at least c.3500 BC by maritime hunter-gatherers-fishers. Given that the actual tundra-covered islands provided only “minor, though necessary, plant resources such as spring shoots and roots and summer berries, and, most crucially, living space,” these Aleuts were notable among other hunter-gatherer-fishers for “an almost excessive focus on sea resources, both for subsistence and technology.” Other shoreline resources included shellfish and the Elymus grass used for baskets, while the only source of wood available was driftwood. Depending on the presence of streams, anadromous salmon and steelhead were of varying significance. Additional major maritime sources of food and materials included other fish (largely halibut and cod), birds and such mammals as sea otters, a range of seals, sea lions and, significantly, whales.<sup>59</sup>

As later, these mammals not only represent the greater part of Aleut food as well as a major technological resource that provided boat coverings, skins for clothes, and the materials for a great many tools. Equally significant is their role in Aleut tales, mythology and systems of belief. Before the development of the large, crewed whaleboat, hunting at sea was carried out by individuals in their own much smaller kayaks. Working in multiples, they attacked whales with specialized spears, lances and

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R.K. Burton, “Archaeofaunal Insights on Pinniped-Human Interactions in the Northeastern Pacific,” in G.G. Monks, The Exploitation and Cultural Importance of Sea Mammals, p. 19. A chart on pp. 24-25 gives the calibrated dates (from c. 6500 BC on) and details of the some 38 sites discussed.

<sup>59</sup>

Lucille Lewis Johnson, “Aleut Sea-Mammal Hunting: Ethnohistorical and Archaeological Evidence,” in G.G. Monks, The Exploitation and Cultural Importance of Sea Mammals, pp. 39-40.

harpoons, equipped with bladder floats.<sup>60</sup> Although the extent of early whaling has been much debated, all agree that given the risks involved in the hunt, “the Aleuts had both specific rules about how the hunters should behave if they wished to be successful and tales relating what might happen to disrespectful hunters.” These involved much magic and many rituals that touched most of the categories of sea mammals hunted, and which often conceived of them as men transformed in harbour seals, sea otters, and so on. Of particular interest are the killer whale “transformation” tales, illustrated by a surviving carving of a killer whale with a human face and capped by a small bird in its nest. Thanks to their symbolic value, killer whales were never the objects of Aleut hunters.<sup>61</sup>

Although living on land, the Aleut “had an obligate reliance on marine mammals for food and industrial resources” that earns them, like their compatriots in British Columbia and California, as well as in Maine, Newfoundland, Scandinavia and Scotland, the right to the title of maritime frontiersmen. Furthermore, like others among those mentioned,

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Ibid., pp. 43-44. For a general overview of the Aleutian “marine-mammal-hunting culture”, see R. McGhee, The Last Imaginary Place, pp. 114-116, and B.M. Fagan, Ancient North America: The Archaeology of a Continent, pp. 176-178.

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L.L. Johnson, “Aleut Sea-Mammal Hunting,” pp. 44-48. On the place of whales and killer whales in Arctic cultures see the numerous references in Tony Allen, et al., Spirits of the Snow: Arctic Myth (London and Amsterdam: Duncan Baird Publishers/ Time-Life Books; 1999), and in Northwest Coast Indian art and legend, Hilary Stewart, Looking at Indian Art of the Northwest Coast (Seattle, WA: University of Washington; 1979), p. 42. The significance accorded killer whales recalls a carving found at Port au Choix in Newfoundland [see James A. Tuck, Newfoundland and Labrador Prehistory (Ottawa: National Museum of Man; 1976), p. 35], which raises the possibility of some shamanistic-like beliefs.



their exploitation of the Ocean's resources was sufficiently efficient, despite the harsh climate, to provide a basis for permanent settlements with semi-subterranean homes, that were supported by seasonal summer camps. Otherwise, the degree of social stratification in early Aleut kayak-based hunting societies is difficult to estimate. Especially skilled hunters obviously were accorded respect while others undoubtedly were known for their skill in building kayaks or fashioning harpoons, lances and other tools. Yet in general, each hunter was expected to make and maintain his own craft, provide his own equipment, and undergo the same long apprenticeship in seamanship and pursuing oceanic game. Given that this frontier society lasted for at least 5000 years,<sup>62</sup> it clearly provided a base for the subsequent development of the Inuit whale-based society with its social stratification based on the large crewed boats, and the consequent prestige and status enjoyed by their captains, that appeared only after 800 AD. And in these, the respect paid specialists in boat construction and producing weapons, tools and so on undoubtedly proceeded apace as well.<sup>63</sup>

In this brief sketch we can discern the structure found in many maritime communities found around the world to this day.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, despite the particular importance of

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L.L. Johnson, "Aleut Sea-Mammal Hunting," p. 58; also pp. 41-44.

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R. McGhee, Ancient People of the Arctic, pp. 121-123, 213-231, and his The Last Imaginary Place, pp. 111-129. The later development of Inuit society is detailed in Renee Fossett, In Order to Live Untroubled: Inuit of the Central Arctic, 1550 to 1940 (Winnipeg, Man.: University of Manitoba; 2001).

<sup>64</sup>

See, for instance, the comments on the social status of captains, usually captain-shipmasters, of sailing vessels in New England's sailing communities in the 1800s, in

whaling in the northeast Pacific, the situation was in many ways similar in Mesolithic coastal communities of Atlantic Europe. There seafaring undoubtedly was essential for moving between habitats, for carrying out a range of subsistence activities, and for maintaining contact between groups of foragers.<sup>65</sup> In Scotland, for example, “people certainly travelled by water and we can be sure that they [boats] were commonplace.” This was especially true along the west coast where the changing sea levels of the early post-glacial era meant that straits of varying widths separated island sites from the mainland and made watercraft a necessity. But even on the mainland, there were extensive networks of lochs and rivers that “provided good access to much of inland Scotland, and they would have been easier to navigate than the densely tree-covered lowlands.” Furthermore, the fact that at least some of the available craft were seaworthy is obvious from the movement of people between mainland and island settlements, and from the remains of deep sea fish which “indicate that boats were also taken further afield.”<sup>66</sup>

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Daniel Vickers with Vince Walsh, Young Men and the Sea: Yankee Seafarers in the Age of Sail (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 2005), pp. 120-126, 260-261; and in whaling towns in particular: Frank K. Gilbreth, Jr., Of Whales and Women: One Man's View of Nantucket History (London and Melbourne: Heinemann; 1957), esp. chapters 3-6, 9-13; and Daniel Francis, A History of World Whaling (Markham, Ont.: Penguin-Viking; 1990), chapter 5.

<sup>65</sup>

S.J. Mithen, "The Mesolithic Age," pp. 105-106.

<sup>66</sup>

Caroline R. Wickham-Jones, Scotland's First Settlers (London: B.T. Batsford/Historic Scotland; 1996, 2000), pp. 116-117. On the colonisation of the islands, also see Richard D. Oram, Scottish Prehistory (Edinburgh: Birlinn Limited; 1997), pp. 13-15.

Here again the antiquity of both boats and the associated social relationships within maritime communities, as well as the respect shown the traditional seafarer's skills, are in evidence, and are indicative of the persistence of the conditions they face on the Ocean frontier. Within this context, Graeme Warren's comments on Mesolithic Scotland deserve special notice. Regardless of the boats in use, he writes that seafaring, although rarely explored and absent from most narratives, "appears to have been, at least for some people, a quite routine activity." Noting that "pilotage," or the moving of "small boats in sight of land," is a skill often described as an "art," he believes that

this describes the involvement of individuals and communities within a flow of interpretation and representation of the world around them... Seafaring then, was not just about boats, but about wider bodies of knowledge. The arguments that the ways in which people learn to notice aspects of the world is tied up with their sense of identity suggests that for some of the later mesolithic communities of western Scotland, paying attention to the sea in particular skilled ways was a key aspect of senses of self. The engagement of a seafarer with the sea was a truly intimate association. In fact, it is the interplay between individuals and communities, between particular interpretations of the world and the bodies of knowledge characteristic of wider groups, that is of real interest. Bodies of knowledge of this kind were not blindly inherited, as part of an individual's birthright, but were inculcated through practice: skills were both taught and learned and the processes of passing on skills formed a key texture of social life.<sup>67</sup>

Warren argues that these processes of developing specialist skills had important social implications. This was because all members of any coastal community, given

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Graeme Warren, *Mesolithic Lives in Scotland* (Stroud, Glouc.: Tempus Publishing; 2005), pp. 90-91. C.R. Wickham-Jones, *Scotland's First Settlers*, p. 116, also notes the need for special seafaring skills when she points out that in "some places navigation must have been far from easy."

factors of health, physique, age, gender and so on, have never had equal opportunities to acquire the seaman's skills. In addition, social differentiation was undoubtedly promoted further by the fact whatever the type of boats in use, they required substantial investments of effort and time, especially in the case of dugouts.<sup>68</sup> Even if owned communally, all members of a community again would not have had equal access to them, an issue probably "woven into complex mosaics of relationships: of who had a claim to use a boat and at what times." Consequently, in communities depending heavily upon coastal and off-shore resources, a combination of skills and boats – as in the case of the Inuit whaling captains – could hardly avoid being an element of social differentiation.<sup>69</sup>

Yet overall, is hardly surprising that, as Filipe Fernandez-Armesto puts it, "where sea and land are thoroughly interpenetrated – where natural harbours open onto navigable seas – civilizations can benefit from the diversification of the environment which the waters offers." But apart from serving as "a source of food," we have seen that Ocean, despite its dangers, also becomes "a highway of trade and a means of expansion."<sup>70</sup> This, in turn, promoted the creation of many of mankind's first political and economic networks of the type recently celebrated by J.R. and W.H. McNeill. One of their prime

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In later maritime societies as well, even transport and other activities by water "involved considerable investment in ships, not to mention the cost of a crew," E.W. Fox, History in Geographic Perspective, p. 34.

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G. Warren, Mesolithic Lives in Scotland, pp. 91-93.

<sup>70</sup>

F. Fernandez-Armesto, Civilizations, pp. 356, 359.

examples is the rapid spread of Inuit whale-hunting technology throughout the Arctic. But similarly impressive is the Inuit network of far-ranging trade ties, both “with caribou hunters and with coastal communities in Asia (whence apparently a few pieces of manufactured iron reached the Inuits before European ships arrived on the scene).”<sup>71</sup> And subsequently, the advantages of coastal locations for those participating in long-distance trade seem amply evident from the later histories of Venice and Genoa, Portugal and Spain, Britain and Holland, and in the north, Scandinavia.

In the view of Graeme Warren, a process similar to that the McNeills describe as existing among the Inuit is evident as well in the microcosm of Mesolithic Scotland. In the latter boats, whoever built and “owned” them, were “vital to the lives of the wider community” as a means of transport and gathering resources. Movement over the adjacent seas, he writes

be it to fish for cod, or to collect traps, or simply to visit kin, provided opportunities for different relationships. Boats most likely carried small groups of people from within the community: at times a family, at other times a small task group, heading off to procure flints, or hunt some boar. These small groups, as they carried out their tasks, most likely came into contact with other groups of foragers: perhaps the smoke from their fires drew them together. Contact with distant kin, or with strangers, provided important contacts in which to maintain and transform relationships of different kinds: to engage in gossip, to arrange marriages, discuss land and

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J.R. McNeill and W.H. McNeill, The Human Web, pp. 21-22. Another example they cite is the Indus-Mesopotamia-Red Sea network or “corridor,” and throughout they stress the vital role played by sea lanes of communication in mankind’s history. For another general comment on the Ocean’s contribution to developing coastal civilizations by, among other things, permitting the creation of political and economic networks; see Philip de Souza, Seafaring and Civilization: Maritime Perspectives on World History (London: Profile Books; 2001), p. 4.

sea disputes, hear rumours of the new and talk of the old.

While there is little clear evidence in the Scottish context of the long-range exchanges between elites of exotic materials and prestige objects, in the sense discussed by Mary Helms (see below), Warren believes that nonetheless, “such associations may be appropriate.”<sup>72</sup>

Whatever the case, he argues that the sea’s central role in the lives of Scotland’s Mesolithic coastal dwellers reflects not only its importance as a source of food and sustenance, but the fact that “bound together with the need for calories were a series of associations that provided the basic substance of mesolithic life in the area.” Such associations were neither “set” nor inevitable, but instead were “developed through experience, and changed over time.” Similarly, the boats involved “were never just birch bark or deer hide stretched on a frame, nor pine or lime transformed by fire and the blow of an antler axe.” Rather, boats emerged as “an intimate aspect” of Scotland’s Mesolithic world so that an exploration of “the fluid associations between these objects, people and landscapes can be very rewarding.”<sup>73</sup>

Furthermore, “ownership” or access to a boat may have permitted distant travel and with it, access as well to knowledge of people, events and techniques other than those prevailing at home; to opportunities to obtain exotic goods and materials; and to alliances – through marriage or otherwise – with distant equals. Mary Helms has

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<sup>72</sup>

G. Warren, Mesolithic Lives in Scotland, p. 92.

<sup>73</sup>

Ibid., p. 93.

powerfully argued that such knowledge and relationships were empowering. Since the power of elites, she writes, is itself “an ‘invisible mystery,’” the “overt evidencing and activating of their roles and abilities is essential, and it is particularly within this context that the association or involvement of elites with ‘distance’ of all sorts becomes an important part of the validation or legitimation of their positions.”<sup>74</sup> In other words, their social prestige was intimately dependent upon, and associated with, the ability to travel, and so with seafaring. Although her theory is usually discussed with respect to the chieftains of the later Bronze Age, and with the advantages that they gained from distant voyaging, there is no reason why such associations – and the accompanying social differentiation – should not have had their roots in the activities of Mesolithic seafarers, if not in Scotland, then elsewhere.

Indeed, Barry Cunliffe’s recent studies of northwest Europe’s Atlantic seaways suggest that they clearly emerged during this same early period as “a means of communication;” that coastal communities depended on the sea as a major resource, both in deeper as well as coastal waters; and “that seagoing vessels were now in use, though we know very little of them.” While “the Mesolithic network of exploitation may not have been extensive,” he argues that “if shoals of fish were being followed on a seasonal basis, then regular patterns of movement involving periodic landfalls will have brought disparate communities into contact,” which in turn would promote a sharing of

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Mary W. Helms, *Ulysses’ Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge, and Geographic Distance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University; 1988), p. 264.

technologies, and in the spread of “beliefs and patterns of behaviour ... along the ocean facade.” Furthermore, he points out that the evidence for such exchange networks between communities becomes still “more readily apparent” with the coming of agriculture in the Neolithic period of the 3000s BC.<sup>75</sup>

In material terms, Cunliffe continues, this is clear in the Neolithic from the mass manufacture and wide distribution of items like the polished diorite stone axes from Plussulien in central Brittany, “no doubt using routes by sea and along major rivers.” More impressive still is the diffusion of systems of beliefs “linking concepts of the cosmos and attitudes towards death and ancestors also spread widely along the Atlantic facade,” as demonstrated by the famous megalithic monuments and tombs found “scattered along the Atlantic, in the Tagus region of Portugal, the Morbihan in southern Brittany, the Boyne valley of Ireland, and the Orkney Isles.” As he points out, radio-carbon dating shows that these clearly reflect “an Atlantic phenomenon owing nothing to Mediterranean inspiration,” and that despite distinct regional characteristics, “the degree to which they shared concepts of architecture, art, cosmology, and belief is remarkable.” Consequently, he concludes, we are faced with a “stunning display of shared culture” that suggests “the rapid and continuous spread of ideas through the long-established social networks that bound the ocean-facing communities and the filtering inland of

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Barry Cunliffe, The Celts: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University; 2003), p. 20.



these practices along the river routes....”<sup>76</sup>

### **Maritime and Oceanic Frontier Communities**

As the technologies of shipbuilding and techniques of seamanship improved over time, so too did the reach of practitioners of the maritime arts. As a result, many of the coastal cultures and societies inhabiting Fernandez-Armesto’s “environmental frontiers” along Ocean’s coastlines made use of the benefits accorded by nature to grow from local into national maritime centres, and some eventually became true outposts of an international oceanic frontier.<sup>77</sup> The distinction here is important: whereas the activities of maritime frontiersmen remain limited to immediate (even if deep-water) coastal environments, or to the narrow seas between known neighboring land masses, the oceanic frontiersman strikes out across the vast oceanic expanses in the search for opportunities for adventure, exploration and profit in distant seas, strange lands and foreign climes. In some ways they can be seen as following in the wake of the legendary immrama or voyages of early Irish clerics. Seeking converts and salvation, they are said to have crossed the liminal threshold of the coast to set out on the ocean wastes of “the Otherworld.”<sup>78</sup> In any case,

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Ibid., pp. 20-21. Cunliffe makes this argument at much greater length in his important study Facing the Ocean: The Atlantic and Its Peoples, 8000 BC-1500 AD (Oxford: Oxford University; 2001, 2004).

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For one analysis of this process see E.W. Fox, History in Geographic Perspective, chapter 3: “The Origin and Growth of the Commercial Community,” pp. 54-71.

<sup>78</sup>

These legends are discussed at length in the essays in Jonathan M. Wooding, ed., The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature: An Anthology of Criticism (Dublin: Four Courts Press; 2000). Of these “voyages” (or literally, “row-abouts”) the best-known is that of St. Brendan, which also is treated in the stimulating but controversial account of

the two frontiers – oceanic and maritime – are closely related and mariners easily pass back and forth between the two. And by so doing, they converted the major maritime ports of Britain’s Atlantic colonies and New England into true outposts of the oceanic frontier, and many of their inhabitants benefitted accordingly.

Consider, for example, Herman Melville’s satirical description of the whaling port of New Bedford in the mid-1800s. It “is a queer place,” he writes:

Had it not been for us whalemens, that tract of land would this day perhaps have been in as howling condition as the coast of Labrador. As it is, parts of her back country are enough to frighten one, they look so boney. The town itself is perhaps the dearest place to live in, in all New England. It is a land of oil, true enough: but not like Canaan; a land also, of corn and wine. The streets do not run with milk; nor in the spring-time do they pave them with fresh eggs. Yet, in spite of this, nowhere in all America will you find more patrician-like houses; parks and gardens more opulent than in New Bedford. Whence came they? how planted upon this once scraggy scoria of a country.

Go and gaze upon the iron emblematical harpoons round yonder lofty mansion, and your question will be answered. Yes; all these brave houses and flowery gardens came from the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. One and all, they were harpooned and dragged up hitherto from the bottom of the sea.<sup>79</sup>

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Timothy Severin, The Brendan Voyage: A Leather Boat Tracks the Discovery of America by the Irish Sailor Saints (New York: McGraw-Hill; 1978), and by the numerous works cited in Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch, eds., The Legend of St Brendan: A Critical Bibliography (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy; 2000). On the reality behind these stories see E.G. Bowen, Saints, Seaways and Settlements in Celtic Lands (Cardiff: University of Wales; 1969).

<sup>79</sup>

Herman Melville, Moby Dick; or, The Whale (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, “Great Books of the Western World,” v. 48; 1952), p. 24. For more on New Bedford, which was founded to supplement the already prosperous whaling port of Nantucket, see Edouard A. Stackpole, The Sea-Hunters: The New England Whalmen During Two Centuries, 1635-1835 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press; 1972), pp. 53-55; Everett S. Allen, Children of the Light: The Rise and Fall of New Bedford Whaling and the Death of the Arctic Fleet (Boston: Little, Brown; 1973), pp.67-131; and Clifford W. Ashley’s

With regional and cultural variations, the same was true along the western and north-western coasts of Atlantic Europe, both ancient and modern. Based initially on inshore fisheries, by the 1400s a vibrant coastal trade developed that carried “anything and everything,” often through a series of “short hauls,” through networks stretching from the Italian Mediterranean ports through the Straits of Gibraltar northwards to Britain, northwest France and the Low Countries, and from there into the Baltic or, via the North Sea, up the coast of Norway and, on occasion, on to Iceland. In this trade, men built and often sailed their own vessels; once backward fishing villages developed into important regional, and sometimes international ports; and a foundation was laid for the great voyages of exploration. Indeed, as Fernand Braudel simply puts it: “The sea was a gateway to wealth.”<sup>80</sup> To this a local historian in Nova Scotia adds: “For young men the oceans of the world were a door to adventure and wealth.”<sup>81</sup>

This statement became particularly true for Europeans with the opening of the Atlantic routes – both south around Africa and eastward to the Indies, and west across the Atlantic and, in time, also across the Pacific to the Indies – that ushered in the some 450-years of K.M. Panikkar’s “Vasco Da Gama Epoch” in Asia, and the age of Western

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richly illustrated The Yankee Whaler (Boston and Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin-Riverside Press; 1926), pp. 28-43.

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Fernand Braudel, Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century, trans. Sian Reynolds, 3 vols., II: The Wheels of Commerce (New York: Harper and Row; 1982), pp. 361-362.

<sup>81</sup>

S.F. Creighton, Colchester County: A Pictorial History (Oxford, NS: Municipality of Colchester Recreation Authority; 1979), p. 59.

dominance on a truly global scale.<sup>82</sup> In Owen Lattimore's opinion, this resulted in "the creation of a new kind of frontier, the overseas frontier," which he classifies on the basis of two basic models. On the one hand, a colonizing European power might conquer a territory "that already had a high culture and well developed state institutions," such as, for instance, parts of Central and South America, or India. There they set themselves up as "a ruling class" and afterwards sought to maintain to a rigidly differentiated social system of victors and vanquished, and an "economic differential" between the home country and the colony. On the other hand, a European state might claim territory which either was relatively sparsely populated, or a land inhabited by people lacking a strong "state system," such as in much of North America, Brazil, the Argentine, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. This territory then became a frontier to be defended against rivals and populated by colonists. These settlers, Lattimore argues, tended to be drawn from the home country, and in some cases their economies were developed by captured or purchased slaves. But unless "slaves were introduced as a new institution," or mercantile policies successfully retarded the colony's economic progress, he insists that "the trend in such colonies was to reproduce the economic and social institutions of the colonizing country."<sup>83</sup>

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As defined in K.M. Panikkar, Asia and Western Dominance: A Survey of the Vasco Da Gama Epoch of Asian History, 1498-1945 (London: George Allen & Unwin; 1959), pp. 13-17.

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Owen Lattimore, "The Frontier in History," in his Studies in Frontier History: Collected Papers, 1928-1958 (London: Oxford University; 1962), pp. 488-489.

Such was certainly the case with regard to the northeastern rim of North America. There the same processes that had gripped the Europe's Atlantic coast in the late Middle Ages were replicated after the late 1600s-1700s, and with great urgency. After all, on arriving in their "New World," the first settlers (and later generations as well) recognized that "shipping was essential for their survival and critical to colonial development."<sup>84</sup> Apart from the ocean-going vessels that provided their only, often tenuous, source of supplies, military support and additional immigrants from home, coastal boats were the primary means of communication between the original colonial communities. Supported by the rich forest resources needed for shipbuilding, the infant colonial coastal settlements naturally were usually attracted to participation in fishing, then in the coastal trade, and finally in oceanic commerce.<sup>85</sup> This was true after 1749, for

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Nancy Redmayne Ross, "Foreword" to Joseph Salter, The Diary of a Maritimer, 1816-1901: The Life and Times of Joseph Salter (St. John's, NFLD: Maritime Studies Research Unit, Memorial University of Newfoundland; 1996), p. v.

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For the most part Nova Scotia's Acadians, before their deportation in 1755-1760, were an exception to this model. Unlike most of the province's later settlers, they had early occupied rich agricultural lands that permitted a high degree of economic self-sufficiency. A few necessities were largely imported through the agency of coastal traders from Massachusetts. Yet by the mid-1700s, even some Acadians were active in this trade; see my "From Frontier to Borderland: The Acadian Community in a Comparative Context, 1605-1710," Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, 7 (2004), pp. 15-37. This situation changed thereafter when most of those returning found themselves confined to coastal lands of limited agricultural utility, and therefore were forced to depend more heavily on the sea. In particular, those exiled to Saint-Pierre and Miquelon had acquired "a taste for the sea, a taste which they never lost," learned to build the schooners, several of which brought settlers back to Cheticamp, where a schooner-building, along with a fishing and associated processing industry, then developed; see Anselme Chiasson, Cheticamp: History and Acadian Traditions (Wreck Cove, NS: Breton Books; 1998), pp. 42-60.

instance, for the coastal towns of Nova Scotia which, as A.R.M. Lower once noted, “is nearly everywhere open to the sea.” As in northwest Europe and contemporary New England, Lower argues that here too this brought the “rapid acquisition of civilized life,” and the subsequent nurture of the civilized arts, in the home ports that benefitted from maritime exchange.<sup>86</sup>

In addition, these developments also meant the appearance of a social type (with an associated tradition) which we can call the “oceanic frontiersman.” In this regard Lower’s own description the era and its seafarers, despite its somewhat idealized tone, is worth quoting at length. By the 1850s, he tells us,

Nova Scotia’s great age of sail was at its height and Nova Scotians were to be found in every port of the world, often in command of their own Nova Scotian-built ships....[This] represented commercial enterprise of a range well beyond farmer-bushman-sailor adaptiveness. Everyone, then as now [i.e., 1956], acknowledged the Nova Scotian’s virtues as a sailor and admired the vast maritime industry (for so small a province) his port merchants had built up. Here was the very heart of the Nova Scotian tradition as it has come down to modern times: the great days of sail, Wooden Ships and Iron Men, as one writer has entitled his book about them. Here was ‘Nova Scotia against the world,’ for there is nothing to make a man recognize his identity so quickly as getting away among foreigners. The old salts who year after year retired from the sea and came to live in the little ‘outports’ of the province would be very much aware of the fact that they were Nova Scotians (a few still exist!), and this attitude would permeate the general population, especially through grandsons and other small boys.<sup>87</sup>

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Arthur R.M. Lower, Canadians in the Making: A Social History of Cansada (Toronto, Ont.: Longmans, Green; 1958), pp. 150-151.

<sup>87</sup>

Ibid., p. 242. His reference is to Frederick William Wallace’s famous Wooden Ships and Iron Men (London: Hodder and Stoughton; 1924). This work is less favourably assessed in Ian McKay’s “Colin McKay’s Alternative Vision of the Age of Sail,” in

Here indeed is an image long cherished by Nova Scotians, an image of a “Golden Age of Sail” in which the Atlantic is cast in the role of a de facto frontier for the “Bluenose” mariners.

Nova Scotian writer Evelyn Richardson confirms the existence of this cherished image when she wrote that while “the settlers of Upper Canada were overcoming vast distances and pioneer difficulties of travel, along our coasts the wide sea-tracks lay open and enticing, leading to the world’s bustling cities and to the far, fair isles.” With such vistas before them and virgin forests at their backs, she argues, the settlers used the latter to fashion the vessels they needed until “Bluenose ships and Bluenose men were found on every sea and in every port.”<sup>88</sup> This and similar descriptions of Nova Scotia’s “golden age” are clearly not devoid of mythic and heroic overtones, a fact rightly pointed out by recent writers such as Ian McKay and Judith Fingard.<sup>89</sup> Nonetheless, as even some of these writers admit, the numerous accounts of the province’s shipping and seamen, of its

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Colin McKay, Windjammers and Bluenose Sailors: Stories of the Sea, comp. and ed. Lewis Jackson and Ian McKay (Lockeport, NS: Roseway Publishing; 1993), pp. 21-29.

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Evelyn Richardson, “Romance of the Sea,” in Meddy Stanton, ed., We belong to the sea: A Nova Scotia Anthology (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing; 2002), p. 3.

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For example, I. McKay, “Colin McKay’s Alternative Vision of the Age of Sail,” pp. 25-29; Judith Fingard, Jack in Port: Sailortowns of Eastern Canada (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1982), who describes (pp. 206-207) Frederick Wallace as “Canada’s best-known maritime antiquarian;” and Richard Rice, “Sailortown: Theory and Method in Ordinary People’s History,” Acadiensis, 13 (Autumn 1983), No. 1, 154-168, for whom even Fingard’s rather harsh portrait is marred by “instancings” and liberal assumptions that result (p. 64) in “a patronizing, middle-class view of sailors and sexuality.”

coastal ports and “outports,” do in fact demonstrate that behind this now romanticized image there lies the reality of a tradition of seafaring, of the associated network of once vibrant Nova Scotian coastal frontier communities, and of the fact that both did indeed contribute heavily to the province’s one-time prosperity.<sup>90</sup> In fact, memories of this reality long survived among many descendants of real seafaring frontiersmen, and were not simply contrived mental images of some generic “fisherfolk” (or if one prefers, Volk) that are “constructed” by a local business elite to satisfy the demands of a “tourist gaze.”<sup>91</sup> As David Alexander once pointed out, the “‘underground hypothesis’ that the [Maritime] provinces sacrificed their economic potential by entering the union with Canada in the 1860s and 1870s” is not without its logic. He concludes, in fact, that since they once enjoyed greater prosperity than at present, “in terms of expectations, Maritimers might well be right to complain that Confederation generated disappointing long-term results,” even if the union did permit them “to maintain a shabby dignity.”<sup>92</sup>

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See, for instance, John G. Reid, Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in the History of The Maritimes (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing; 1987), pp. 93, 97-98, 127-128; and Eric W. Sager, Ships and Memories: Merchant Seafarers in Canada’s Age of Steam (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press; 1993), pp. 3-4. Although referring to Canada in general, Sager’s remarks are relevant to Nova Scotia as well.

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On the alleged construction of the “fisherfolk” and the “tourist gaze” in general, see Ian Mackay, The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia (Montreal, PQ-Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen’s University; 1994), pp. 126-127, 226-250. A case study employing these concepts is Cheryl Sullivan, “The Paradox of Bluenose II: Antimodernism, Capitalism and the Legacy of the Schooner Bluenose in Nova Scotia,” Nova Scotia Historical Review, 16 (1996), No. 2, pp. 1-20.

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David G. Alexander, “Economic Growth in the Atlantic Region, 1880-1940,” in his Atlantic Canada and Confederation: Essays in Canadian Political Economy, comp. Eric



Equally important, within their maritime communities, seafarers along the length of North America's Atlantic coast were supported by a network that bound together "both commerce and naval affairs, shipbuilding, the fisheries, mariners, the vessels they manned, and their unique culture." As already suggested, within these networks women "played active roles, sometimes at sea, more often ashore." Others who depended on the sea included the adjacent native Americans, along with the blacks and other ethnic minorities [who] worked as crew members on board and along the waterfront" on both sides of "the Pond."<sup>93</sup> Beyond these groups, the maritime world of these regions encompassed "much that lies within 'the land's edge': the bays, sounds, and waterways that link our coastal settlements; that seaports that stand as gateways to a continent; and the rivers, canals, and inland seas that have carried both people and waterborne commerce to and from the continent's vast interior." In their time, such inland waterways were as important as railroad networks in the later 1800s, or the highways in the 1900s, and they long continued "to provide a significant connection between land and sea."<sup>94</sup>

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W. Sager, Lewis R. Fischer and Stuart O. Pearson (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto-Memorial University of Newfoundland; 1983), pp. 51, 74.

<sup>93</sup>

Benjamin W. Labaree, et al., America and the Sea: A Maritime History (Mystic Seaport, CT: Museum of America and the Sea; 1998), p. 4. The same point is made, but with a radically different purpose, by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic (Boston: Beacon Press; 2000). For a similar and extended analysis of similar coastal societies elsewhere, and of the crucial distinction of a city with a port and a port-city, see the chapter "Humans and the Sea," in Michael Pearson, The Indian Ocean (London and New York: Routledge; 2003), pp. 27-45.

<sup>94</sup>

B.W. Labaree, et al., America and the Sea, p. 4. Canada's canals are reviewed in John P.

Against this background it is small wonder that a British poet of the mid-1600s recorded that the “merchant bows to the seaman’s star.”<sup>95</sup> Yet all ports and port regions were not equally well served by inland networks of riverine communications, and the need to turn to the sea was more pressing in some areas than in others. But whatever its immediate natural advantages, a great port usually requires at least a local “hinterland” to ensure its further development and future prosperity. An Anglicization of the German Hinderland, geographers use this term “to denote the land behind a port from which produce is collected for export and into which goods imported into the port are distributed.”<sup>96</sup> The extent of such area can vary widely from port to port. As has been frequently pointed out, those situated on great inland waterways (like London on the Thames, New York on the Hudson or Montreal on the St. Lawrence) became major metropolitan and oceanic centers at the expense of others, less fortunately placed (including even Boston),<sup>97</sup> and gained an economic reach that stretched inland to the

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Heisler, “The Canals of Canada,” published as Canadian Historic Sites: Occasional Papers in Archaeology and History, No. 8 (Ottawa: National Historic Sites Service, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; 1973), while those in Britain are briefly but conveniently introduced in Neil Cossons, intro., The National Waterways Museum: Souvenir Guide (Gloucester, Glouc.: National Waterways Museum; n.d.) While the importance of canals elsewhere is stressed in K. Pomeranz and S. Topik, The World That Trade Created, pp. 64-67.

<sup>95</sup>

Sir William Davenant (1606-1668), “Song,” in Robert Penn Warren and Albert Erskine, ed., Six Centuries of Great Poetry (New York: Dell-Laurel; 1955), p. 230.

<sup>96</sup>

L. Dudley Stamp, Applied Geography (Harmondsworth, Mddlx: Penguin Books; 1960, 1964), p. 165.

<sup>97</sup>

On the advantages and success enjoyed by the metropolis of New York, see Samuel

great land frontiers (or peripheries) of the last century.<sup>98</sup>

### **Rival Metropolitan Ports in British North America after 1800**

Unlike the great ports just mentioned, other have only a more regional and maritime significance. Such, for example, is Stornoway in Scotland or St. John's in Newfoundland. In the case of the first, the hinterland was confined to the Outer Hebrides, while the second mainly served the colony's own outports, largely by means of coasting vessels. But both also acted as receiving and forwarding ports for at least one major metropolis.<sup>99</sup> Apart from seamen and ports, however, during the 1800s the present Maritime Provinces themselves were also major suppliers of shipping and timber. According to one estimate, by the 1850s the Maritimes and Newfoundland accounted for over 70 percent of all shipping registered in British North America and, with combined

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McCoy, "The Imperial City of New York," Current History, 22 (May 1925), No. 2, pp.178-187.

<sup>98</sup>

The concept of a metropolis importing staples from a hinterland became firmly established in Canadian historical writing thanks to such writings of Harold Adams Innis as The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy, (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1940), and elaborated further by Donald Creighton's The Empire of the St. Lawrence (Toronto, Ont.: Ryerson; 1956). Creighton explicated and defended the metropolitan view, over that of the frontier in Canada, in an interview with Pul Fox, as reprinted in Michael S. Cross, The Frontier Thesis and the Canadas: The Debate on the Impact of the Canadian Environment (Toronto, Ont.: Copp Clark Publishing; 1970), 40-41, and the issue is discussed at greater length in J.M.S. Careless, Frontier and Metropolis: Regions, Cities, and Identities in Canada before 1914 (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1989), pp. 33-67.

<sup>99</sup>

L.D. Stamp, Applied Geography, p. 165.. On St. John's see Paul O'Neill, The Oldest City: The Story of St. John's, Newfoundland, rev. ed.(Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, NFLD: Boulder Publications; 2003), pp. 709-738.

populations of some 500,000, “were major sea powers” with over 6000 ships.<sup>100</sup> In other ways as well, the sea assumed great importance in the local economy so that the populations of these colonies became much more dependent on maritime activities than Britain’s territories elsewhere in North America. Apart from maintaining port facilities, shipping, fishing, sealing or whaling, these cities, towns and “outports” became centres for a shipbuilding industry that both sold vessels abroad while also promoting a range of other domestic trades and crafts, as well as a lumber industry that denuded much of the boreal forests even before the arrival of the pulp and paper companies.<sup>101</sup>

On occasion, however, a major port might owe its significance to other – usually political or strategic – than economic factors. As Judith Fingard, Ian Robertson and Julian Gwyn have pointed out, this was the case with Halifax. Partially due to “the tyranny of location” this city, despite its splendid harbour, “lacked a productive adjacent

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<sup>100</sup>

Ralph S. Johnson, Forests of Nova Scotia: A History (Halifax, NS: NS Department of Lands and Forests-Four East Publications; 1986), p. 95, and Margaret R. Conrad and James K. Hiller, Atlantic Canada: A Region in the Making (Don Mills, Ont.: Oxford University; 2001), p. 118, who note that some credit Britain’s Atlantic colonies as representing the world’s fourth largest merchant marine. Some idea of the activities and details of the larger vessels involved can be gained from Frederick William Wallace, In the Wake of the Wind-Ships: Notes, Records and Biographies Pertaining to the Square-Rigged Merchant Marine of British North America, illus. (New York: George Sully; 1927), and his compilation, Record of Canadian Shipping: A List of Square-Rigged Vessels Mainly 500 Tons and Over, Built in the Eastern Provinces of British North America from the Year 1786 to 1920, illus. (London: Hodder and Stoughton; 1929).

<sup>101</sup>

On this process see R.S. Johnson, Forests of Nova Scotia, Parts 5-6, 57-124 and the comments in Charles C. Hughes, et al., The Stirling County Study of Psychiatric Disorder and Sociocultural Environment, 2: People of Cove and Woodlot (New York: Basic Books; 1960), pp. 48-49.

agricultural hinterland and had no other exploitable resources nearby.”<sup>102</sup> Although A.R.M. Lower rightly suggests that this “little capital” developed “the air of a local metropolis, not mere provincial city,” and that this air, once “acquired, has never been lost,” none of this had much to do with the “command of its own hinterland.” For although the capital’s elite, be it dubbed conservative or otherwise, had official “control of the province’s financial structure,” regular overland ties with the prosperous Annapolis Valley came only with the development of a railway in the mid-1800s and in other areas, with that of proper highways after 1920.<sup>103</sup> Before these projects

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102

Judith Fingard, “The 1820s: Peace, Privilege, and the Promise of Progress,” and Ian Ross Robertson, “The 1850s: Maturity and Reform,” in Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid, eds., The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History (Toronto, Ont., and Fredericton, NB: University of Toronto/ Acadiensis; 1995, 1998), pp. 227 and 337, respectively; Julian Gwyn, Lecture on the History of Halifax Harbour, on the occasion of the exhibit “At the Great Harbour: 250 Years on the Halifax Waterfront,” Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Summer 1999. Gwyn presents his full analysis of the Nova Scotian economy during this period in his Excessive Expectations: Maritime Commerce and the Economic Development of Nova Scotia, 1740-1870 (Montreal, PQ, and Kingston, Ont: McGill-Queen’s University; 1998). For a more up-beat assessment see Brian Cuthbertson, Voices of Business: A History of Commerce in Halifax, 1750-2000 (Halifax, NS; 2000), published – not surprisingly – by the Metropolitan Halifax Chamber of Commerce!

103

The slow development of the province’s early transportation system to the mid-1800s is briefly reviewed in Paddy Muir, Great Roads: A History of the Nova Scotia Road Builders Association (Halifax, NS: NS Road Builders Association; 1995), pp. 9-17; Marguerite Woodworth, History of the Dominion Atlantic Railway (Kentville, NS: Dominion Atlantic Railway, 1936), chapters 1-5; and Annie Wallace, “The History of the Nova Scotia Railway,” Nova Scotia Historical Review, 6 (1986), No. 2, 67-72. Otherwise, there are three unpublished studies of our early highway and transportation system: Will R. Bird, “History of the Highways of Nova Scotia” (Manuscript in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia), and two Dalhousie University Master’s theses in history, Arthur Tanner Elliot Smith, “Transportation and Communications in Nova Scotia, 1749-1815” (1936), and Reginald Dickey Evans, “Transportation and

communication with the Valley region, and indeed with rest of the province, was largely carried out by coastal vessels.<sup>104</sup> Thus the city's "well-defined metropolitan characteristics"<sup>105</sup> and regional status owed more to its role as a convenient stop-over and port of refuge for sailing vessels en route to and from Liverpool, England, and New York,<sup>106</sup> along with its roles as a political-religious-administrative centre for the colonial government and as a naval base, than they did to Halifax's own flourishing industries and export of resources from some dependent and subordinated interior.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore,

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Communication in Nova Scotia, 1815 to 1850" (1936).

<sup>104</sup>

Despite the railway-building craze after 1850, for many places in Nova Scotia this remained the case until the road-building programs of the 1920s-1930s. For example, Belcher's Farmer's Almanac For the Maritime Provinces, Dominion of Canada, 97: For the Year of Our Lord 1920 (Halifax, NS: Royal Print & Litho; 1920), pp. 324-332, devotes roughly four pages listing rail routes, one-sixth of a page to remaining stage-coach routes, and 3.4 pages to the regular coastal steamer services. These last are described in J.P. Anfrieux, East Coast Panorama: The History of Shipping Companies on Canada's East Coast from 1900 Onward (Lincoln, Ont.: W.F. Rannie; 1984). The importance of such packets is indicated by the petitions requesting service submitted to Halifax by the citizens of Arichat in 1877, 1909 and 1911; see Gervais (Garvie) Samson, The River that Isn't: A Tale of Survival and Prosperity, River Bourgeois, Cape Breton to 1994 (Dartmouth, NS: Author; 1994, 1995), pp. 97-99. For coastal Newfoundland the situation only changed after Confederation in 1949.

<sup>105</sup>

All the above quotations are from A.R.M. Lower, Canadians in the Making, pp. 150, 242.

<sup>106</sup>

William Menzies Whitelaw, The Maritimes and Canada before Confederation, intro. Peter B. Waite (Toronto, Ont.: Oxford University; 1934, 1966), p. 12.

<sup>107</sup>

Julian Gwyn has also examined this city's naval significance in the late 1700s-early 1800s, and its corresponding economic impact, in his Frigates and Foremasts: The North American Squadron in Nova Scotia Waters, 1745-1815 (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press; 2003), and Ashore and Afloat: The British Navy and the Halifax Naval Yard before 1820

and despite the presence of the naval yard, Halifax never developed into a shipbuilding centre and the vessels registered in the port were primarily engaged in fishing, coastal carriage, the West Indies trade, and “the business of ‘commission merchant’, taking and filling orders for specific goods in Nova Scotia and elsewhere.”<sup>108</sup> In this situation, there are good grounds for arguing that rather than depending on Halifax, southwest Nova Scotia, along with both shores of the Bay of Fundy and Minas Basin regions, fell more directly into a traditional hinterland of Boston, not of Halifax. George Rawlyk<sup>109</sup> demonstrates that this situation predated the founding of that second city and thereafter, exports southward helped fuel Maritime prosperity in the mid-1800s.<sup>110</sup> Later still, limitations on entry into the American markets long remained a major concern of

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(Ottawa, Ont.: 2004). In this regard, the position of Halifax was in some ways not dissimilar to that of Gibraltar which, naturally, had no hinterland whatsoever; Maurice Harvey, Gibraltar: A History, foreword Sir John Chapple (Staplehurst, Kent: Spellmount; 1996, 2000), pp. 113-130.

<sup>108</sup>

I.R. Robertson, “The 1850s: Maturity and Reform,” p. 337.

<sup>109</sup>

George A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia’s Massachusetts: A Study of Massachusetts-Nova Scotia Relations, 1630 to 1784 (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University; 1973). In this regard an earlier historian of the region once observed that presumably, “these North American communities [e.g., the Maritimes and New England], had they been left alone, could have fought out their differences, domestic and external, and have slowly achieved a unity, or unities, of a sort;” John Bartlet Brebner, North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States, and Great Britain (New Haven, CT: Yale University; 1945, 1947), p. 39.

<sup>110</sup>

I.R. Robertson, “The 1850s: Maturity and Reform,” pp. 336-337, provides statistics and discusses the issue of the Maritime dependence on American markets.

Atlantic economists, as is evidenced by S.A. Saunders' study of 1932.<sup>111</sup>

Given the recent arrival of the Planters from New England, Nova Scotians (occasional privateers aside) were far from enthusiastic imperial patriots during the American Revolutionary War.<sup>112</sup> Nonetheless, for whatever reason, for the most part they ended as passive supporters of the British cause, and so remained within the reorganized British Empire that emerged in 1783. Privateers again apart, Nova Scotians once more proved reluctant opponents of their New England cousins during the conflict of 1812-1814,<sup>113</sup> and were somewhat ambivalent observers of the Civil War 1861-1865.<sup>114</sup> In the meantime, however, the "Boston States" were often the destination of Maritimers, fishermen included, seeking new lives.<sup>115</sup> Even today, in the realm of

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S.A. Saunders, The Economic Welfare of the Maritime Provinces (Wolfville, NS: Acadia University; 1932).

112

On this issue see John Bartlet Brebner's classic The Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia (New York: Columbia University; 1937); the range of views presented in George A. Rawlyk, ed., Revolution Rejected, 1775-1776 (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice-Hall Canada; 1968); the discussion of Donald Desserud, "Nova Scotia and the American Revolution: A Study of Neutrality and Moderation in the Eighteenth Century," in Margaret Conrad, ed., Making Adjustments: Change and Continuity in Planter Nova Scotia, 1759-1800 (Fredericton, NB: Acadiensis Press; 1991), pp. 89-112; and G.A. Rawlyk, Nova Scotia's Massachusetts, chapters 12, 13.

113

John Boileau, Half-Hearted Enemies: Nova Scotia, New England and the War of 1812 (Halifax, NS: Formac Publishing; 2005).

114

Greg Marquis, In Armageddon's Shadow: The Civil War and Canada's Maritime Provinces (Halifax, NS/Montreal, PQ-Kingston, Ont.: Gorsebrook Research Institute/McGill-Queen's University; 1998).

115

The extent to which the southwest Nova Scotian and Fundy fishery formed an integrated



baseball, the Fundy region is often considered part of the “Red Socks Nation” and the Boston team (not the hated Blue Jays!) remains the choice for many of its older residents. More anecdotally, although my grandfather lived in Bridgetown and worked for the Dominion Atlantic Railway from age fifteen, he sent my father to medical specialists, and my aunt to train as a nurse, in Boston (not Halifax). This was at a time, of course, when perhaps 150,000 Maritimers departed the region, many for New England.<sup>116</sup>

Canadian historians, however, usually prefer to assign this region to the hinterland of Saint John, New Brunswick. Thanks to the Nova Scotian capital’s unfavourable circumstances and lack of an immediate hinterland, Halifax could hardly compete economically with this rival port, the Maritime region’s largest city of the day. Standing at the mouth of the St. John River, the city dominated that river’s valley and tributaries, as well as the Fundy coasts of both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, a region with an estimated 300,000 inhabitants by 1860.<sup>117</sup> Although it lacked the benefits accorded a provincial capital, unlike Halifax it had early (1785) received a municipal charter that

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zone with those of New England is graphically evident from the map of North Atlantic fishing ports in J.B. Brebner, North Atlantic Triangle, p. 266.

116

J.G. Reid, Six Crucial Decades, pp. 134, 165; and M.R. Conrad and J.K. Hiller, Atlantic Canada, pp. 169-170. As a case study see Alan A. Brooks, “The Golden Age and the Exodus: the Case of Canning, Kings County,” Acadiensis, 11 (Autumn 1981), No. 2, pp. 57-82.

117

T.W. Acheson, St. John: The Making of a Colonial Urban Community (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1985), p. 21. This represents over 50 percent of the population of the British mainland colonies.

permitted the city's magistrates to regulate the piers, wharves and harbour traffic.<sup>118</sup> The value of the forest resources for shipbuilding had been recognized earlier still, and in 1700 the 44-gun French warship Avenant reportedly called at the harbour to ship fine masts for the French fleet. St. John's first home-built vessel, the schooner Betsy, was laid down there by Michael Hodge and Adonijah Colby in 1769, despatched on 3 February 1770 with a cargo for Newburyport in Massachusetts in early February 1770, and sold for L200 in 1771. In this manner the pattern was set that would long guarantee the future prosperity of St. John.<sup>119</sup>

Throughout the 1820s-1830s the lumber trade expanded and, as Judith Fingard observes, the economy of St. John served as the "central element" in New Brunswick's development. While the hinterland of the St. John River sustained a growing population that fueled that port's role as an entry point for imports, and immigrants,<sup>120</sup> a growing stream of timber

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<sup>118</sup>

W.S. McNutt, New Brunswick: A History, 1784-1867 (Toronto, Ont.: Macmillan Canada; 1963, 1984), pp. 58-59.

<sup>119</sup>

Frederick William Wallace, The Romance of a Great Port (St. John, NB: Committee of the Transportation Festival; 1935), pp. 9, 13, and he deals with New Brunswick's shipping more directly in his In the Wake of the Wind-Ships, pp. 135-183.

<sup>120</sup>

J. Fingard, "The 1820s: Peace, Privilege, and the Promise of Progress," p. 279, who also notes that the city's central position was briefly challenged by the Miramichi in the 1830s. For the parallel developments there see "The People of the Miramichi," in Louise Manny and James Reginald Wilson, Songs of Miramichi (Fredericton, NB: Brunswick Press; 1968), pp. 25-27. At this stage Quebec also became a timber and shipbuilding centre; see Mazo de la Roche, Quebec: Historic Seaport (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran; 1944), pp. 185-191, and Eileen Reid Marcil, Tall Ships and Tankers: The History of the Davie Shipbuilders (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart; 1977), pp. 41-125.

exports departed for markets overseas.<sup>121</sup> It is estimated that by 1833, a third of Britain's tonnage (some 300,000 t.), crewed by some 16,000 seamen, were engaged in carrying various forms of lumber from St. John, Quebec and other ports in British North America. On their return voyages they increasingly were fitted with rough berths between decks to accommodate emigrants from the Old World who paid fares of L7 per adult for fare and provisions, or only L3 pounds if one brought one's own supplies. By 1830 some 40,000 had reached Canada from Europe, 30,000 of which arrived in timber ships. Their numbers swelled with the depression and Irish potato famine of the 1840s, when thousands – possibly as many as 25,000 during 1847-1848 alone – died of ship fever or other diseases, and brought epidemics ashore with them. For example, in June 1846, a year when 7000 immigrants landed, the ship Envoy introduced cholera into St. John. So when fifty ships arrived at St. John in 1847 with another 17,000 passengers, among whom typhus had broken out, a quarantine station was established on Partridge Island where over 2000 died and were buried in that same year.<sup>122</sup>

Meanwhile, the expanding timber trade in turn promoted shipbuilding on both shores

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The standard study of the rise of New Brunswick's forest industry and its exports is Graeme Wynn, Timber Colony: A Historical Geography of Early Nineteenth-Century New Brunswick (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1981)

<sup>122</sup>

F.W. Wallace, The Romance of a Great Port, pp. 11,13; W.S. McNutt, New Brunswick: A History, pp. 302-303. For a somewhat more critical view of these events see Cecil Woodham-Smith, The Great Hunger: Ireland, 1845-1849 (New York: Harper and Row; 1962), pp. 204, 223-225, 236. St. John, however, is virtually ignored in Edwin C. Guillet, The Great Migration: The Atlantic Crossing by Sailing Ship, 1770-1860, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.(Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1963), which mentions the port on only four occasions.

of Fundy.<sup>123</sup> As Frederick William Wallace put it, the “woods started moving towards the sea, not alone in the form of square timber, deals and spars, but also in the shape of large finished ships, barques and brigs.” He perhaps exaggerates in stating that “[p]ractically all the vessels constructed for the timber trade were sold in England”<sup>124</sup> since initially, the colonial-built vessels were small and crude, and enjoyed poor reputations with outsiders.<sup>125</sup> Yet by the 1840s experience had bred the quality workmanship evident in the celebrated Marco Polo. Registered on 31 May 1851, it was

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Local histories of shipbuilding and associated activities along New Brunswick’s Fundy shore include Marion Gilchrist Reicker, Those Days Are Gone Away: Queen’s County, N.B., 1643-1901 (n.p.: author-Queen’s County Historical Society; 1981), pp. 94, 153-160; Dale E. Alward, Down Sackville Ways: Shipbuilding in a Nineteenth Century New Brunswick Outport (Sackville, NB: Tantramar Heritage Trust; 2003); William B. Hamilton, At the Crossroads: A History of Sackville, New Brunswick (Wolfville, NS: Gaspereau Press; 2004), pp. 95-105; Ross N. Hebb, Quaco–St. Martin’s: A Brief History. The First Hundred Years, 1784-1884 (Fredericton, NB: Quaco/Springhill Press; 1997), pp. 55-150; Ethel Thompson, The Tides of Discipline (A Personal History of Three Traditional Fishing Communities Fishing Communities -- Chance Harbour, Dipper Harbour and Maces Bay – Situated on the South Shore of New Brunswick) (St. Stephen’s, NB: Print’N Press; 1978, 1980), pp. 43-51, 62-69; Evans Hill, ed. The Journals of George C. McAllister, January 1, 1831 to July 27, 1833 (St. Stephen, NB: Author; 1958), 3-4; and more generally, Robert S. Elliot and Alan D. McNairn, Reflections of an Era: Portraits of 19<sup>th</sup> Century New Brunswick (St. John, NB: New Brunswick Museum; 1987), *passim*.

124

F.W. Wallace, The Romance of a Great Port, p. 11.

125

In 1813 a British officer inspecting the militia in St. Andrews observed “several large ships” building in the stocks for British merchants and remarked “although equally looking,” they in fact were “very inferior to British built vessels” and, thanks to the wood used, “seldom sea-worthy after seven years’ use;” (Lt. Col.) Joseph Gubbins, New Brunswick Journals of 1811 & 1813, ed. Howard Temperley (Fredericton, NB: New Brunswick Heritage Publications No. 1; 1980), p. 47. Also see the comments from the latter 1820s cited in W.S. McNutt, New Brunswick: A History, p. 214;

sold to the Black Ball Line and as a packet between Liverpool and Australia, became famous as the world's fastest clipper.<sup>126</sup> By that date St. John had survived the trade crisis of the 1840s to emerge by the late 1850s as "the biggest shipbuilding centre in the Maritime region and one of the leading shipowning ports in the world." Indeed, at this date the sale of ships as such was indeed "a significant source of export earnings."<sup>127</sup> In fact, during that decade recent calculations demonstrate that 76 percent of all the tonnage newly registered in St. John was eventually sold to Great Britain or Ireland.<sup>128</sup> Added to the profits from immigrant vessels, the export-import trade of its hinterland, and the carrying trade elsewhere, this income helped create the prosperity that supported some 4000 artisans, of whom only one-quarter were in trades associated with shipbuilding.<sup>129</sup> These considerations also reflect the fact that both the Fundy

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Ibid., p. 332; F.W. Wallace, The Romance of a Great Port, pp. 21-27; Martin J. Hollenberg, Marco Polo: The Story of the World's Fastest Clipper (Halifax, NS: Nimbus Publishing; 2006), especially pp. 26-48.

127

I.R. Robertson, "The 1850s: Maturity and Reform," p. 335. On one of the great shipbuilding dynasties of St. John, see "The Troops of Saint John," in Stanley T. Spicer, The Age of Sail: Master Shipbuilders of the Maritimes (Halifax, NS: Formac Publishing; 2001), pp. 88-105.

128

Eric W. Sager with Gerald E. Panting, Maritime Capital: The Shipping Industry in Atlantic Canada, 1820-1914 (Montreal, PQ-Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University; 1990), Table 2.2, p. 31. The average age of vessels at the time of the transfer of registry was 4,1 years. The builders in port city and elsewhere along the St. John also had early begun producing steam-powered river craft; see George MacBeath and (Capt.) Donald F. Taylor, Steamboat Days on the St. John, 1816-1946 (St. Stephen, NB: Print'N Press; 1982).

129

I.R. Robertson, "The 1850s: Maturity and Reform," p. 337. For details of the later

region and Nova Scotia's South Shore ports were "nearer and more accessible to such great American ports as New York and Boston than they were to the Canadian ports on the St. Lawrence" or even, W.M. Whitelaw points out, "to their own ports on the North Shore." By sea, Yarmouth is closer to Boston than to Pictou, and St. John to New York than to Bathurst on the Bay of Chaleur. Furthermore, voyages from both Yarmouth and St. John to the West Indies were less dangerous than a summer trip to Quebec or Montreal by the St. Lawrence with its treacherous currents, reefs and rocks, and poor navigational aids.<sup>130</sup> But situated as they were along the edge of the Atlantic on Nova Scotia's South Shore, or with easy access to the ocean on that province's or New Brunswick's Fundy coasts, these ports presented what Whitelaw calls an "Atlantic frontage" that faced mainly east and south, and not west and north (the Grand Banks and Gulf cod fisheries excepted).<sup>131</sup> By contrast, although shipbuilding developed along the North Shores of both provinces,<sup>132</sup> as well as in Prince Edward Island,<sup>133</sup> Whitelaw

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development of St. John, see Elizabeth W. McGahan, The Port of Saint John, I: ...From Confederation to Nationalization, 1867-1927: A Study in the Process of Integration (St. John, NB: National Harbours Board; 1982).

<sup>130</sup>

In winter, of course, such a voyage was impossible since ice closed the St. Lawrence.

<sup>131</sup>

W.M. Whitelaw, The Maritimes and Canada, pp. 12-13. A similar view is expressed in G. Marquis, In Armageddon's Shadow, pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>132</sup>

See Phyllis R. Blakeley and John R. Stevens, Ships of the North Shore (Pictou, Colchester and Cumberland Counties) (Halifax, NS: Maritime Museum of Canada; 1963). Like Pictou and Charlottetown in Prince Edward Island, the Miramichi was one of the seven major building centres of Maritime sailing vessels; I.R. Robertson, "The 1850s: "Maturity and Reform," p. 395; Louise Manny, Ships of the Miramichi: A History of Shipbuilding on the Miramichi River, New Brunswick, Canada, 1773-1919

argues that their economies remained relatively underdeveloped. Even Pictou, whose harbour once cleared a thousand ships annually, and whose shipyards once rivaled those of Liverpool and Yarmouth, reached this position thanks to its coal mines. In time, these last were overshadowed by those of Cape Breton, after which Pictou declined both as a port and a building centre to the advantage of the Sydneys.<sup>134</sup> But even accepting that

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(St. John, NB: New Brunswick Museum; 1960); and S.T. Spicer's chapter "The Miramichi and Joseph Cunard," in his The Age of Sail, pp. 11-27. In light of this, and the industrial development in Amherst and the New Glasgow-Trenton-Pictou region, Whitelaw clearly overstates his argument; see, for example, James M. Cameron, Pictou County's History (New Glasgow, NS: Pictou County Historical Society; 1972), pp. 98-123, and Del Muise, "'The Great Transformation:' Changing the Urban Face of Nova Scotia," Nova Scotia Historical Review, 11 (1991), No. 2, 1-42.

133

On Prince Edward Island see Errol Sharpe, A People's History of Prince Edward Island (Toronto, Ont.: Steel Rail Publishing; 1976), pp. 63-68, 125; "The Peakes of Prince Edward Island," in S.T. Spicer, The Age of Sail, pp. 28-47; and Lewis R. Fischer, "The Port of Prince Edward Island, 1840-1889: A Preliminary Analyss," in Keith Matthews and Gerald E. Panting, eds., Ships and Shipbuilding in the North Atlantic Region (St. John's, NFLD: Maritime Studies Group, Memorial University; 1978), pp. 60-72.

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W.M. Whitelaw, The Maritimes and Canada, pp. 9-10., who notes that at least well over half the vessels mentioned were heading for the United States or Halifax. This coast's regional maritime contacts over time are chronicled in George E.G. MacLaren, "Communications in the Northumberland Strait and the Gulf of St. Lawrence, 1775-1951," Nova Scotia Historical Quarterly, 1 (June 1971), No. 2, 101-125. On Pictou shipping and building see James M. Cameron's Pictou County's History, pp. 71-83, and his more extensive The Ships, Shipbuilders and Seamen of Pictou County (New Glasgow, NS: Pictou County Historical Society; 1990), as well as Rosemary E. Ommer, "Anticipating the Trend: the Pictou Ship Register, 1840-1889," Acadiensis, 10 (Autumn 1980), No. 1, pp. 67-89. The industry at other ports along the shore was from the start often viewed as being more precarious; see, for instance, Frank H. Patterson, History of Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia (Halifax, NS: Royal Print and Litho; 1917), pp. 59-63.

Cape Breton's early maritime significance is discussed in Christopher Moore, "Cape Breton and the North Atlantic World in the Eighteenth Century," in Kenneth Donovan, ed., The Island: New Perspectives on Cape Breton History, 1713-1990 (Fredericton, NB, and Sydney, NS: Acadiensis-University College of Cape Breton; 1990), pp. 31-48. Its

Whitelaw may overstate his case, the fact remains that Britain's North Atlantic colonies largely did face westward, that they did establish a vibrant fishing and coasting maritime frontier, and that in some cases, if only for a few decades, they did succeed in transforming this into distant and far-flung oceanic frontier.

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later shipping is examined in Rosemarie Langhout, "Alternative Opportunities: The Development of Shipping at Sydney Harbour, 1842-1889," in Kenneth Donovan, ed., Cape Breton at 200: Historical Essays in Honour of the Island's Bicentennial, 1785-1985 (Sydney, NS: University College of Cape Breton; 1985); and the ships and careers of Cape Breton captains involved in (Capt.) John P. Parker, Ships and Men: The Golden Age of Wooden Ships in Cape Breton Island (Wreck Cove, NS: Breton Books; 2003).



**CONCLUSION:  
THE TWO FRONTIERS**

The monster bulk sweeps on  
Loud from the deep, with might roar and panting  
It hurls the waves before; it stirs up whirlpools;  
On, on it bounds; it dashes back the spray,  
Awhile, it seems a bursting tempest cloud;  
Awhile, a rock uprooted by the winds,  
And whirled aloft by hurricane; or masses  
Beaten by concourse of the crashing waves;  
The sea seems battering o'er the wrecks of land;  
Or Triton, from their roots the caves beneath  
Upturning with his trident, flings to heaven  
A rocky mass from out the billowy deep.

-- Translation of Attius (b. 170 BC), "A Shepherd Describes his First Sight of a Ship,"  
by R. Garnett (1835-1906), in Richard Garnett, *et al.*, The Book of Literature: A  
Comprehensive Anthology, 34 vols. (New York: Grolier Society; 1922, 1923), 5, pp.  
116-117.

In the above discussion I suggest three themes that seem to me worthy of attention by historians of the oceans in general, and of the Atlantic in particular. In the first place, I argue that it is worth regarding the oceanic “water world” as a human “frontier,” but that one that resists “settlement,” and therefore lasting domination and closure as well. Secondly, it seems to me that in dealing with the “mariner-frontiersmen” who traverse Ocean’s surface, braving its constant dangers and seeking to exploit its resources, we should distinguish between two “frontiers” and two categories of “frontiersmen:” those whose activities are largely confined to the coastal or near-coastal waters, or what I call a “maritime-coastal frontier,” like most Newfoundlanders. They therefore differ from those whose voyaging takes them further into the vastness of Ocean and the associated “oceanic frontier” that girdles the globe, as was the case with so many seafarers from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and New England during the 1800s. If the conditions of their work, family life and communities may well differ, both groups can be called “people of the sea, not just on it.”<sup>1</sup> This is because neither simply lives geographically “by the sea.” Rather, both gain their livings from Ocean’s resources, face similar dangers from this watery environment, pay an equally high cost in lives for pursuing their business, and work in conditions in which their members often find the transition from one group to the other is comparatively easy.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Pearson, The Indian Ocean (London and New York: Routledge; 2003), p. 27.

My third theme is the proposition that Ocean and the world's seas and oceans have continually imposed conditions typically associated with life on a "frontier" on seafarers and their supporting coastal populations, and that this has a profound cultural impact on coastal communities. It is hardly surprising that the poet Attius' (or Accius') uninitiated peasant-herdsman's first sight of a galley scurrying across the sea strikes terror in his heart. For the shore, beach or tide-line long remained a mysterious spiritual, as well as a physical borderline, the crossing of which took the mariner from one world to another. For like land frontiers, seas and Ocean long have been perceived as offering opportunities for adventure and enrichment, for social advancement and a chance of a better life. Yet they are the scene of disasters as well, and many "land-lubbers" have a traditional distaste for the ocean that is reflected in the German folk tales or Marchen collected by the brothers Grimm.<sup>2</sup>

These overwhelmingly ignore Ocean, those who live on the coastlines of its seas, as well as those who sailed upon them, and they show little if any knowledge of maritime techniques. All these qualities are apparent in the story of the fisherman and the talking flounder. Thus this intrepid harvester of the sea is fishing not from a boat with a net, but from the shore's bank with a rod and line. Furthermore, he regards the magic fish as poor fare for supper and so is easily talked into releasing it back into the sea. Even so,

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The nature of the work of the brother folklorists Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, and of the tales they collected, is discussed and illustrated in Maria Tatar, ed. and trans., The Annotated Brothers Grimm, intro. A.S. Byatt (New York: W.W. Norton; 2004), especially her essay "Reading the Grimm's Children's Stories and Household Tales: Origins and Cultural Effects of the Collection," pp. xxvii-xlvi.

as his wife immediately recognizes, the fish – and by extension, the sea – offers the chance of unexpected wealth and social advancement. Over and over again she sends her husband back to the flounder – or Ocean – to demand an ever greater upgrades in her dwellings and social position. Her ship has finally “come in,” and it does so repeatedly, until she becomes king, then emperor and finally pope. But her unbounded ambition (to be God) and avarice ends by bringing disaster when her husband’s final resort to the flounder (or sea) brings ruin and she ends by being restored to her original pig-stye.<sup>3</sup>

As the above summary suggests, this “fairy tale” can be read at a number of levels that illuminate the themes of this present study. First and most directly, once the fish is recognized as being symbolic of the sea or Ocean, the latter is clearly regarded as a possible source of sudden wealth and even of social mobility. At the same time, however, it is an undependable ally. As the recent Indonesian tsunami and Gulf Coast hurricanes dramatically demonstrated, Ocean is a fickle mistress who can impoverish as quickly as enrich those who rely upon her for their living. Not surprisingly, most of the Grimms' peasant-farmer storytellers preferred the less dramatic (if still often insecure) life on land to the much more unpredictable dangers and terrors of an adventurous “life on the ocean waves,” the conditions of which most mariners believe are beyond the landsman’s comprehension.<sup>4</sup> “Proverbs warning of the perils of putting to sea,” notes a

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"The Fisherman and his Wife," in *Ibid.*, pp. 86-99, or Joseph Scharl, Grimm's Fairy Tales. Complete Edition (New York: Pantheon; 1944), 112-121.

4

Apart from my above comments on this issue, this issue is discussed at some length in David Kurby and Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, The Baltic and the North Seas (London and

recent history of Europe's northern coastal seas, "can be found throughout northern Europe, from Britain to Russia; Sancho Panza and Danish folk wisdom were at one t declaring that, if one wished to pray, one had only to go to sea."<sup>5</sup>

Even so, the "call of the sea," or the contagion of John Masefield's "sea fever"<sup>6</sup> still could reach far inland to inflame the imaginations of rebellious farm-bred youth. Perhaps bored by the "idiocy of rural life" so despised by Karl Marx,<sup>7</sup> the beckoning oceans have continually cast an often irresistible, and possibly primordial, spell throughout our history. In fact, it has never been exceptional to find that youths from non-coastal, inland farming or professional families seek careers in the world at Ocean. Herman Melville notes the presence in New Bedford of inland "Vermonters and New Hampshire men, all athirst for gain and glory in the fishery"<sup>8</sup> and similar examples from elsewhere could be cited. The point here, however, is that it is not only youths from coastal states and regions who became "sea-struck." As an "adolescent fetched up temporarily in in Ohio," but still fascinated by the "two magical words" of Cape Horn,

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New York: Routledge; 2000), pp. 186-188.

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Ibid., p. 41.

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The famous poem "Sea Fever" appears in John Masefield, Poems. Complete Edition (New York: Macmillan; 1941), pp. 20-21.

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Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," in Algernon Lee, ed., Essentials of Marx, rev. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Rand School Press; 1946), p. 35.

8

Herman Melville, Moby Dick; or, The Whale (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, "Great Books of the Western World," v. 48; 1952), p. 24.

writes Dallas Murphy, “I read everything in the lubbery library to feel the sea fantasy....I was the saltiest kid in the seventh grade, with a library card to prove it,” even if his fellow “classmates out on the alluvial plain didn’t even know where Cape Horn was.”<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the most notable example of such a “sea-struck” lad is Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort (1774-1857), compiler of the famous “Beaufort Scale” of winds. His sister Louisa Catherine recalled that much to his family’s surprise, at age five he suddenly “manifested the most decided preference for the sea, had even refused to learn Latin or any of the rudiments of a learned profession & uniformly persisted in choosing a Naval life for his department.”<sup>10</sup>

The absolute number of “prairie sailors” in North America has not surprisingly multiplied many-fold since the closing of the “settlement frontier” of the West during the later 1800s-early 1900s. When Joseph Husband arrived at the recruiting station in Chicago to volunteer for the fleet in 1917, he joined a “long line of men already were waiting to swear their loyalty to Uncle Sam's Navy.” They filed one-by-one into the recruiting-room to be met by

a dozen jackies, in neat uniforms with their yeoman's ratings on their blue

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Dallas Murphy, Rounding the Horn: Being the Story of Williways and Windjammers, Drake, Darwin, Murdered Missionaries and Naked Natives — A Deck’s-Eye View of Cape Horn (New York: Basic Books; 2004), p. xi.

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Quoted in Nicholas Courtney, Gale Force 10: The Life and Legacy of Admiral Beaufort (London: Headline Books-Review; 2002, 2003), pp. 8-9. Also see Scott Huler, Defining the Wind: The Beaufort Scale, and How a Nineteenth-Century Admiral Turned Science into Poetry (New York: Crown Publishers; 2004), p. 18. She added that at that time, she doubted he had even seen the sea.

sleeves, shamed our motley civilian clothes in contrast. Short and tall, stout and thin, from Texas, Ohio, Colorado, and Minnesota, in cheap 'sports suits,' sweaters, caps, derbies, every kind of clothing, with broken dress-suit-cases, cord-bound, with paper bundles, and many with hands empty -- here was young America in its infinite variety."<sup>11</sup>

Apart from the patriotic occasion, the number of prairie farmers responding to the nation's call in both the United States and Canada may also reflect the fact that the prairies were no longer a settlement frontier, absorbing the energies of their once limited rural populations; that as these last increased numerically and free land became scarcer, the opportunities open to young men declined accordingly; and that the sailor's trade no longer demanded many of the traditional skills associated with the age of sail in order to man modern machine-powered vessels. Yet such factors merely explain why such farm boys were available, and why it was easier for them to acquire the new skills, assuming that they were not already used to deaking with machinery from working on their tractors, trucks and harvesters.<sup>12</sup>

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Joseph Husband, "1918: Ordinary Seamen, U.S.N.", in Louise Desaulniers, ed., Selections from 119 Years of the Atlantic, intro. Robert Manning (New York: Atlantic Monthly; 1977), p. 273. Recruits in Chicago, of course, may have included many Great Lakes sailors.

<sup>12</sup>

For the experiences of Canadian prairie sailors see the memoirs of "The hired hand at Idlewood Farm," George Zarn, Prairie Boys Afloat (High River, Alb.: Author; 1979), and Jeffrey V. Brock's, The Broad Dark Seas: With Many Voices (Toronto, Ont.: McClelland and Stewart 1981), pp. 11-40. The very different complex and much more unique skills required of a sailor in the age of sail are detailed in William N. Brady's handbook The Kedge-Anchor or Young Sailors' Assistant, Appertaining to the Practical Evolutions of Modern Seamanship, Rigging, Knotting, Splicing, Blocks, Purchases, Running-Rigging, and Other Miscellaneous Matters, Applicable to Ships-of-War and Others, 18<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: D. Appleton; 1888; facsimile reprint Almonte, Ont.: Algrove Publishing; 2007).

But to return to our folktale.... At another level it is the story's locale that is significant. Our fisherman is definitely identified as a coast dweller, even though his style of fishing is more reminiscent of a grassy river bank. More significant still is the fact that the quite ordinary meeting of man and fish is described as occurring in an atmosphere of some mystery, so that the flounder's ability to speak and other magical qualities cause no surprise.<sup>13</sup> But if we delve more deeply, what is suggested is that the shore is being treated as a transitional or liminal zone, or a borderline at which two very different worlds meet. One is the sea, home of the mysterious, magical flounder, a frontier of unexpected opportunities and unimagined riches.<sup>14</sup> The other is the land, the home of the peasant farmer and the realm of the commonplace, the humdrum, the practical, and of limited opportunities to change one's status. These two realms are separated by the coast, the borderland by which one passes back and forth from one to the other. This also can also be seen as a "ritual landscape" in which the fish – a symbol long associated with divinity – acts as facilitating guide or "liminal agent."<sup>15</sup>

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Maria Tatar, The Annotated Brothers Grimm, p. 89, notes that the German usually translated as "flounder" – Mantje – is most likely a variant of Mannchen, High German for "little man." In this case, the flounder clearly is one of the sea spirits that populate the early myths of Europe's coastal inhabitants..

14

Maria Tatar, Ibid., maintains that the "sea is presented here both as a force of nature and as a gauge of divine wrath." Neither, of course, negates my interpretation; rather, they reinforce it inasmuch as nature gives and nature takes away, and that gauge of wrath also measures God's approval, which nature will likely reward.

15

These issues are discussed at length in Christer Westerdahl, "Seal on Land, Elk at Sea: Notes on and Applications of the Ritual Landscape at the Seaboard," The International Journal of Nautical Archaeology, vol. 34 (April 2005), No. 1, pp. 2-23, to which is



Apart from the attitudes found among German and other peasants elsewhere, our discussion also has demonstrated the extent to which the image of Ocean, the perils posed by its weather and waters, and the heroism and losses involved in mastering these dangers, have deep roots in human culture.. More recently, the process by which these maritime themes have become integrated, romantically or otherwise, into our modern traditions has been paralleled by the more or less simultaneous integration of the “frontier myth,” created by the American Western Movement, into that same culture. In fact, it seems that tales from these two “frontiers,” despite their differing realms of action, meet the same psychological needs in the populace at large, both in America and in Europe. Yet apart from the glory of great naval victories and the heroism of rescues at sea, the romance of the oceanic frontier has always seemed more muted. After all, the American West (like the Northwest Frontier in India), with its dust, sweat and everyday dangers, remained distant from its most ardent admirers. Their knowledge of it came only through novels, Wild West Shows, cowboy songs and, eventually, Western movies and television shows. Their chances of meeting the scalped survivor of a dramatic attack on a wagon train, the crumpled victim of a real-life drunken gunslinger, or a emaciated brave from a poverty-ridden reservation, were next to nil.<sup>16</sup>

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appended a full bibliography.

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On the nature of the relationship of the realities and images of the American Western Frontier as seen from a distance, see Christine Bold, Selling the Wild West: Popular Western Literature, 1860-1960 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press; 1987), and David H. Murdoch, The American West: The Invention of a Myth (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press; 2001), esp. chapters 2-3 and his excellent bibliography. The place of the Western movie in American, and indeed Western, culture is examined in Will

For most of us this may be equally true of some of the most celebrated villains of our maritime and Oceanic frontiers -- the coastal “wreckers” and seafaring pirates or buccaneers – and it is hardly surprising that in both cases, the legends of the Old World are mirrored in those of the New World.<sup>17</sup> Yet if the past pirate is often romantically regarded almost as a Robin Hood or freedom-fighter of the seas,<sup>18</sup> the contemporary reality is far less attractive. Like the usually less violent smugglers,<sup>19</sup> pirates are still active. Apart from anecdotal stories of missing pleasure craft in the Caribbean or off of Mexico’s West Coast, since the 1980s verified reports have proliferated of attacks by

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Wright, Six Guns and Society: A Structural Study of the Western (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California; 1975). The place of maritime themes is meanwhile examined in Sea Brothers: The Tradition of American Sea Fiction from Moby-Dick to the Present (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 1987).

<sup>17</sup>

An example of modern British wreckers are described by Bella Bathurst, The Wreckers: A Story of Killing Seas and Plundered Shipwrecks, from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present Day (Boston: Houghton Mifflin; 2005), pp. 172-181. Although these scavengers present little danger to modern mariners, pirates are a different matter.

<sup>18</sup>

The literature on pirates has later expanded exponentially thanks to the popularity of such recent movies as Pirates of the Caribbean. Among the most important studies relating pirate myths to reality see Marcus Rediker’s Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seaman, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge University; 1987) and his Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age (Boston: Beacon Press; 2004); Hans Turley, Rum, Sodomy and the Lash: Piracy, Sexuality and Masculine Identity (New York: New York University; 1999); David Cordingly, Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirates (New York: Random House; 1995); and Benerson Little’s more technical The Sea Rover’s Practice: Pirate Tactics and Techniques, 1630-1730 (Washington, DC: Potomac Books; 2005).

<sup>19</sup>

For a traditional view of British smugglers see Graeme Cook, Sea Adventures: True Stories of Sailors in Peace and War (London: Macdonald and Jane’s; 1974), pp. 11-20.

small high-speed craft on tankers and other large vessels in Brazilian coastal waters, off of East Africa and in the South China Sea. In 1992, for example, a Piracy Reporting Centre was established in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and for 2004 it reported that the year had witnessed 325 attacks (including 93 in Indonesian waters and 39 off of Nigeria), during which thirty people had been killed (compared to 21 in 2003). Again, the pursuit of the luxury liner Seaborne Spirit by pirates armed with automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades dramatically demonstrated that even cruise ships now are targets. So like storms and reefs, pirates appear to be another recurring, if less pressing, threat to those who ply Ocean's extended frontier.<sup>20</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly, wreckers have enjoyed a still more sinister reputation. Often drawn from the ranks of the most impoverished inhabitants and communities of the maritime frontier's coastal fringes, they usually were mere scavengers who worked the edges of the sea. But in so doing, they ended by creating an image of the wrecker as the almost mythical enemy of the seafarer and his passengers alike, or – for others – as the

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David Pickering, Pirates: From Blackbeard to Walking the Plank (London and New York: Harper-Collins; 2006), pp. 244-245. Early fears of the danger posed by pirates to American vacationers and their yachts is evident in novels such as Ray Kyle's Last Voyage (New York: Dell; 1979). Warnings that the threat is still with us are briefly outlined in Gail Selinger with W. Thomas Smith, Jr., The Complete Idiot's Guide to Pirates (New York and London: Alpha-Penguin Books; 2006), pp. 342-344, and more extensively in Paul Raffaele, "The Pirate Hunters," Smithsonian, 38 (August 2007), No. 5, pp. 38-44; and William Langewiesche, The Outlaw Sea: A World of Freedom, Chaos, and Crime (New York: North Point Press; 2004), pp. 35-84. A somewhat different view, which includes the political "piracy" on the part of states and terrorists, as well as aircraft hijackings, is provided by the Communist Polish commentator Ya. Makhovskii, Istoriia morskogo piratstva [History of Maritime Piracy] (Moscow: Izd. "Nauka"; 1972), pp. 208-284.

symbol of pure evil.<sup>21</sup> In both cases, of course, the historical record is much more complex and variegated than such simplistic legends suggest. Thus the term “wrecker” in fact covers a range of actors and environments that apart from the desperate coastal poor, has included their more socially respectable maritime profiteers as well.<sup>22</sup> More importantly, all these characters met along the coastal fringe, and at the shoreline, within the liminal zone that simultaneously separates and connects the worlds of sea and land. Consequently, wreckers or “salvers,” as they are sometimes more respectably known, were also true borderers surviving on the “landwash,” the fringe of both land and sea.

However we view Ocean’s “bad boys,” the fact remains that despite occasional and even the odd notable example to the contrary, in the public’s eyes both pirates and wreckers (unlike smugglers) have been relegated to the same romantic past as the Old West’s Indian-fighters and gunslingers. This said, the American West also had the advantage of representing the unusual, as is demonstrated in a press release for Buffalo Bill’s (William Cody’s) Wild West Show of 1887: “The Only Real Novelty of the

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See, for example, the comments in Bella Bathurst, The Wreckers, pp. 220-221. In large part the wreckers’ bad reputation reflects the fact that they were acquiring goods to which their social betters claimed the right of “salvage.” North America’s wreckers have had a generally better press; see Birse Shepard, Lore of the Wreckers (Boston: Beacon Press; 1961), which is subtitled “A True Saga of the Rough and Gallant Men – Many Heroes and a Few Rascals – Who Braved the Lashing Seas from Newfoundland to Key West to Save Ships, Cargoes and Human Lives.”

22

The term “wrecker” also was applied to captains who deliberately wrecked their vessels so as to collect the insured value. One such is portrayed in Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, The Wrecker (Toronto, Ont. and London: Musson Book Company/Cassell; n.d.).

Century. The Amusement Triumph of the Age. The Romantic West Brought East in Reality.”<sup>23</sup> If events on the oceanic frontier were still commemorated in operas, poems, songs, stories and pictures, it origins were, by contrast, ancient and its realities – both in terms of mundane toil of the fishers and seamen, and in those of the costly toll in lives – were much closer and more visible to most Europeans and many Americans. Indeed, not just the Irish relatives of the victims of Thoreau’s doomed St. John, but even Russian, Polish and Swabian peasants might well have lost friends and relatives to the seas when a crowded emigrant vessel succumbed to the winds and waves.<sup>24</sup> And if this familiarity never bred complacency, it did militate against glamour, especially in the coastal towns

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Quoted in D.H. Murdoch, The American West, p. 24. For a study of this “Buffalo Bill,” his show and its significance, see Robert A. Carter, Buffalo Bill Cody: The Man Behind the Legend (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley; 2000), and Larry McMurtry, The Colonel and Little Missie: Buffalo Bill, Annie Oakley, and the Beginnings of Superstardom in America (New York: Simon and Schuster; 2005). The portrait and influence of another Western character, a veteran “cowpuncher,” was recently analysed by Howard R. Lamar, Charlie Siringo’s West: An Interpretative Biography (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico; 2005), while the cowboy reality id discussed in Warren M. Eloffson, Frontier Cattle Ranching in the Land and Times of Charlie Russell (Montreal, PQ, Kingston, Ont. and Seattle, WA: McGill-Queen’s University-University of Washington; 2004); and the legacy of the Indian wars in Michael A. Elliott, Custerology: The Enduring Legacy of the Indian Wars and Georger Armstrong Custer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago; 2007). Ranching, the cowboy tradition and “wild west shows” in Canada are dealt with in essays in Simon Evans, Sarah Carter and Bill Yeo, eds., Cowboys, Ranchers and the Cattle Business: Cross-Border Perspectives on Ranching History (Calgary, Al. And Boulder, CO: University of Calgary/University of Colorado; 2000).

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Henry David Thoreau, “Cape Cod,” in Thoreau: Walden and Other Writings, ed. and intro. Joseph Wood Krutch (New York: Bantam Books; 1968, 1971), pp. 407-413. For a more general review of emigrant shipping disasters, see Edwin G. Guillet, The Great Migration: The Atlantic Crossing by Sailing-Ship, 1770-1860 (Toronto, Ont.: University of Toronto; 1937, 1965), pp. 124-137.

and networks that supported the seafaring frontiersmen. Nonetheless, in terms of the possibilities they offer, the hopes they spark, the legends they engender, and heroism required by those who brave their uncertainties to exploit their resources on both the water and the shore, the Ocean and its component seas present us with frontiers as real as the comparatively brief-lived movement across America to the Pacific. And as such, the frontier of Ocean is much more ancient, much more enduring, and has had a much deeper (and perhaps a similar) impact on the cultures of those who line its shores or traverse its expanses.

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