

new and vigorous people, hostile to all subjection, advancing and multiplying." The Treaty of Paris thus created an unexpected predicament for the Spaniards. The acquisition of the Floridas fulfilled their long-standing dream of a continuous transcontinental empire in North America, and yet their position felt more threatened than ever.

Spain's simultaneously strong and susceptible position spawned several drastic foreign political schemes. Spanish officials closed the lower Mississippi to American shipping in order to isolate the settler-farmers in Kentucky and Tennessee from transportation and market outlets, but opened Louisiana and the Floridas for American emigrants who promised to become Catholics and the king's vassals. But this policy of confining and co-opting the Americans was a mere emergency measure: Spain's chief tactic in checking the expansionist United States was a new secularized Indian policy.

Lacking the demographic and military power to restrain the Americans, Spanish officials set out to build extensive barriers of loyal Indians on both sides of the Mississippi valley to block the seemingly imminent American expansion to the Great Plains and northern Mexico. Instead of conversion and coercion, the traditional cornerstones of Spain's Indian policy, the agents were now instructed to rely on treaties, trade, and gifts to win Indians' allegiance. East of the Mississippi, the officials negotiated by 1784 agreements with Creeks, Alabamas, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles, creating an extensive Indian-alliance network that covered much of the area under dispute with the United States. Carlos III then appointed Bernardo de Gálvez, Louisiana's celebrated governor during the American Revolution and nephew of José de Gálvez, as the viceroy of New Spain. Gálvez's jurisdiction was extended over the Interior Provinces, Louisiana, the Floridas, and Cuba in the hope that the energetic young officer could organize those wide-ranging dominions into a unified front against the United States....

The Making of American Nationalism

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Nationalism in America hasn't been a great idea that has waxed and waned, something that people truly had or did not have. It has been a set of practices that empowered Americans to fight over the legacy of their national Revolution and to protest their exclusion from that Revolution's fruits. It is not inherently reactionary or progressive; like other nationalisms, its political meanings are multiple, even contradictory, and can be shown to have changed radically over time. Thus, it will be instructive, first, to see how, by stressing the ideological nature instead of examining the everyday practice, we have misunderstood American nationalism....

The particular strategies of early American nationalists derived from a particular moment in world history. Older approaches to that nationalism tended to ignore the international trends of “the age of the democratic revolutions” (perhaps better termed the age of the nationalist democratic revolutions). Newer scholarship stresses that the invention of modern democracy in the late eighteenth century was inextricably tied to the creation of newly coherent national peoplehoods whose will, it was believed, ought to be expressed in national political institutions. A “dramatically new political culture” emerged in both France and England during this era, despite these nations’ very different political histories. [Petitions, huge outdoor meetings, committees of correspondence, and innovative uses of the press energized older customs like ritualized crowd actions. The new reality of the age was much more than the idea of the nation: it was the new political practices justified in the name of the nation and its people.]

The rites of nationhood are best understood in the context of this broad range of popular activities, often festive or celebratory, that constituted political action between elections. Too often, an anthropological understanding of such ritual has led scholars to view American holidays in isolation both from the customary and innovative behavior of early modern crowds and from the ritualized rhetoric and behaviors that made up an expanding sphere of politics. From its beginning, the Fourth of July—itsself the model for an expanding calendar of post-Revolutionary festivals—drew upon these traditions and innovations. Much as the Fourth improvised upon the old holiday of the King’s Birthday, the new American nationals demonstrated their joy or sorrow in a wide range of political events and anniversaries. These nationalist celebrations consisted of far more than parades: there were orations, celebratory dinners at which politically rousing toasts were given, and printed commentary on all of these, in their wake. Such rituals might have aspired to a unity beyond political division, but, because of their origins and the political needs of various groups, they did not and could not merely reflect ideological consensus. Instead, they engendered both nationalism and political action.

This irony has been lost on even the most prescient students of American culture. Perhaps because our expectations of nationalist ritual have been formed by the relentlessly (but really only seemingly) depoliticized celebrations of a later day, scholars still recoil at the inescapably partisan parades of the early Republic. In a work otherwise sensitive to the value of conflicts over the meanings of patriotism and national memory, Michael Kammen writes: “Perhaps the most notable aspect of Independence day in our early history was *not* that it became an occasion for consensus, but rather that for a while memory frequently fell victim to fierce factional disputes. Partisanship and mutual recriminations became the order of the nation’s natal day, rather than reciprocal congratulations based upon shared legends.” Politicization here victimizes “memory,” which must be completely shared and consensual in order to be truly national; as a result, a familiar dichotomy recurs: parades are really something other than politics.

This study argues nearly the opposite: that relentless politicization gave nationalist rituals their most important meanings. Conflict produced “the nation” as

contestants tried to claim true American nationality and the legacy of the Revolution....

New England as America

By the end of the eighteenth century, New Englanders had a long tradition of national regionalism. From the Puritans of the 1630s to the Boston rebels of the 1760s, even when New Englanders did not see themselves as America writ small, they at least defined themselves as its saving remnant. The myth of the errand into the wilderness persisted. Into the nineteenth century, latter-day Puritans could still see the emergence of an American empire as a direct continuation of their original project.

Yet by the mid-1790s it had become clear that New England was losing political power in the nation as a whole. Eastern areas remained nearly stable in population while the natural and imported increase was forging southward and westward into less densely settled regions. The increase in the number of states was decreasing the proportion of senators and representatives who championed New England interests in Philadelphia and then Washington. Thanks to the Napoleonic Wars, Yankee farmers and merchants flourished during the decade after ratification; but international conflict also led to controversies over national policy, like Jefferson's embargo, that highlighted the distinctiveness of Yankee political economy. Nationally, New England Federalists were on the defensive after 1800, when a series of Virginia Republicans occupied the presidency, and they found themselves increasingly challenged by "democrats" at home.

Tellingly, the rearticulation of New England regionalism began in an attack upon southern distinctiveness. New England Federalists projected the growing internal opposition to their political dominance at home into the nether regions, making the southern planter the emblem of a national threat: hypocritical support for democracy and the French Revolution. Who were those "feudal barons, who reign over a thousand negroes," to talk of aristocracy in government? The partisan critique of southern slavery meshed with rising antislavery activity in the North, but Federalists held no patent on antislavery notions in New England. The critique in this instance was part of a strategy to conflate party and region: to symbolically place all the nation's sins (including the Republican opposition) "mostly in the southern and middle states." Actually, such expressions made only a limited contribution to antislavery, because they were not meant to end slavery: they were meant to discredit southern Jeffersonians and their allies. The New England attack on southern slaveholding often centered on the three-fifths clause of the Constitution (by which 60 percent of slaves were counted in apportionment of presidential electors and seats in the House of Representatives, increasing white southern power in the federal government). Nothing in their pronouncements suggests that Federalists thought that southern slaves—or, for that matter, free blacks north or south—should exercise the vote. Thus the participants at a Forefathers' Day feast in Boston toasted, "Our Sister

Virginia—when she changes three fifths of her Ethiopian skin we will respect her as the head of our White family.”

If the rise of the Republicans fearsomely paralleled the demographic growth of the South, the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory in 1803 threatened to further reduce New England's power in the nation. Orators wasted little time in blaming the South, and Virginia in particular, for a scheme that would lead to New England's subjection and, eventually, western secession. George Washington Stanley insisted that any “inhabitants of New England” who celebrated such an event could no longer be “in principle New-Englandmen.” On the Fourth of July prominent Federalists accused Virginia of “trying to divide the northern from the southern states” and seeking to “increase the number of her *slaves* among the *freemen* of New England.” In 1804, a profusion of toasts urged New Englanders to “resist the encroachment of Southern despotism.” Campaigns to alter the three-fifths clause or delay the admittance of new states to the union were said to illuminate the Constitution by a “steady Northern light.”...

For the next decade, New England Federalists cultivated a vision of a loyal but aggrieved northern America. The geographical contours of this region remained purposefully ambiguous, as these Federalists hoped to bring eastern or seaport areas, particularly New York, into their northern or eastern political fold. The image of the feudal landlord or aristocratic tyrant, surrounded by his real (black) and political (Republican) servants, helped opponents of Jefferson to rewrite the “Revolution of 1800” as the first act of an era that they hoped would conclude with their own second American Revolution. “The People of the Northern States” were toasted by the Connecticut Cincinnati in 1804: “Descended from Freemen, they will never be governed by Southern Slaves.”

The Embargo controversy helped the Federalists to flesh out this picture with an international dimension. Southerners were “Frenchified enemies to commerce,” and New England Republicans mere functionaries of the French interest. In this atmosphere, disunion, unspeakable to nationalists, could be openly discussed or even proposed, because its cause was always the actions of the conspiring, foreign-influenced other party. Disunion was really a defense of New England (and America) against narrow regionalists who cloaked their southern agenda in nationalism. Republican papers carried article after article on the “Essex Junto,” who favored a northern confederacy. Federalists replied with exposes of the “Virginia Junto,” who caused the bad blood in the first place.

Although the machinations of real Essex secessionists amounted to little, northeastern Massachusetts emerged nonetheless as the mythic center of New England, if only because it revived the celebration of the Pilgrims' landing at Plymouth and Puritan Forefathers' Day in Boston. On these occasions, similar in form to General Election Day rites, Federalist preachers reminded all who came of the superior virtues of New England's founding generation. If the “myth of New England exclusiveness” developed and disseminated through these festivals was a provincial myth, it also asserted its righteous Americanness

and for this reason served New England's Federalists well. It helped them relocate declension geopolitically, justifying their resistance to the federal government as the godly actions of a saving remnant.

When the Republican-dominated Congress, led by southern and western War Hawks, voted to commence hostilities against England in 1812, Massachusetts governor Caleb Strong lost little time in declaring a statewide fast for July 23. In his official message Strong beseeched God to "inspire the President and Congress, and the Government of Great Britain, with just and pacific sentiments," Pointing to England as the "bulwark of [our] religion" and the source of American patrimony, Strong asked every citizen to pray against an American alliance with the infidel, France.

This fast on July 23, also observed in Connecticut, set the tone for the remarkably sectional dissent of the New England Federalists during the War of 1812. Seizing upon the form of the fast day as avidly as they had in the late 1790s, sacred and secular officials alike described a true New England that resisted the war effort out of tradition and a belief in their region's superior Christianity. "The Puritans of New England must not, will not, cannot be dragged into this execrable war," intoned Elijah Parish in the best-known of the 1812 fast sermons. "You must change the radical traits of your character, you must cease to be New England men, before you can exhibit this tame, African, slavish deportment." Throughout the war, these Federalists portrayed Republicans not only as southern and western in orientation and as morally and racially contaminated by a slavish dependence on slaves but also as Frenchified "infidels." "Fast Day, appointed by our excellent Governor Strong," wrote a leading citizen of Brookline in his diary: "that the People may atone for their sins in electing over them rulers, without Honesty or Knowledge, men neither fearing God or who have any love for their country."

Federalist leaders combined this revival of New England Christian identity with a claim to the heritage of the American Revolution. A widely published song of 1812 presents the New England "fathers" as the planters of liberty in America. Their eighteenth-century sons defended these liberties against the British and the French; this tradition gave Americans the right to stay out of Europe's interminable wars. But then the Madison administration had dropped the country back into the "quicksand" of imperial struggles:

They might know, witless dunces, the method at once, is
To give up the helm to *New-England*—

.....

Our true Northern notions would settle commotions,
And teach them respect to *New-England*.

In 1812 Federalists still hoped for an electoral solution to the problem of the war; this preelection song rallied the faithful to the polls. Yet the "them" here seems intentionally ambiguous: is it Europe, or the floundering Republican administration, that must learn "respect to *New England*"? In the next

stanza, the Republican rulers themselves are again the culprits. Having left the northern coasts unprotected, they seem to revel in the decline of New England and in its possible invasion by the enemy. Nevertheless, "these buckskins will find, the Yankee's inclin'd / To stick to the RIGHTS OF NEW ENGLAND." After this defense of ancient, local liberties that antedate yet inform the American national Revolution, the song concludes with a promise to join loyally in wartime defense:

But since War is declar'd, let us all be prepar'd,
 For the dangers that threaten our dear land;
 With a STRONG to parade us, who'er may invade us,
 We'll fight for the RIGHTS of *New-England*—
 We'll die or live free in *New-England*—
 In the shade of the TREE of *New-England*—
 And the NATION shall know, who is truly their foe,
 Is also the foe of NEW ENGLAND!

"Our dear land," it turns out, may suffer "dangers" from any number of invaders, perhaps including the federal government. New England must be defended, but can be only from within New England itself, under the original liberty tree. Although it is finally admitted the "the nation" is more than New England, the last appeal is one of self-definition through opposition. The real enemies of America are those who oppose New England's "RIGHTS."

Placing themselves simultaneously in the lineage of the Puritans and the founding fathers, New England Federalists constructed a mythic South and West that possessed no real claims to the legacy of the Revolution. It should be stressed, though, that the Federalists did so in a manner no less authentic than the Republicans' own version of the War of 1812 as a struggle to reestablish the (once again unstable) "national character." Theirs was the conservative American Revolution, the one limited to the restoration of ancient (British) rights and privileges. The Massachusetts Federalists consistently stressed New England's British heritage, ethnic homogeneity, and leadership of the Revolution. On the floor of the House of Representatives and in an often reprinted Washington Benevolent Society oration, Josiah Quincy charged that the "original compact" of the nation had been abridged by the extension of equal representation to "Frenchmen, Spaniards ... Creoles and Negroes." In a truly reactionary derivation of political citizenship, intellectuals and politicians like Quincy traced American rights, not to nature, but to genealogy, prefiguring a century of racial Anglo-Saxonism that would continue to validate its intellectual pedigree in New England. "Our adversaries accuse us of foreign partiality, we love no country like our own," insisted Benjamin Whitwell in Boston's official July Fourth oration in 1814.

We are attached to the union, being all members of one body, of which Virginia assumes to be the head, but we know that NEW-ENGLAND is the heart; their sons have no certificates of French citizenship to divide their

love. She has no patriots by adoption.... Her sons trace their descent from ancestors, whose institutions they preserve and whose memory they venerate. She requires no mixture of the best nations on earth in her political composition, let the head, and the heart, and the arm be purely American.

"Ancestors," in these New England festivals of national memory, meant Puritans and revolutionaries. Latter-day patriots did not have to resist Old England at all, since the new tyrants lay among the partisans of the new France.

The isolation of New England during the war only strengthened the ideological link between the defense of liberty and New England tradition. Federalists in other states gladly lauded Massachusetts as the leader of this latter-day rebellion in toasts like one given at Fairhaven, Vermont, on July 4, 1813: "The Commonwealth of Massachusetts—The cradle of American liberty; she still nurses its defenders." Those Massachusetts legislators who supported attempts to foil the enlistment of federal troops in New England "evinced a spirit worthy of *Freemen*, but dreadful to tyrants." Resistance to war was defense of the Revolution, and Federalists who sang celebratory odes participated in national renewal:

Rouse to action every power,
Now's the dire, decisive hour,
True to freedom's high command,
Independence bids you stand.

Indeed, the "clamorous patriots of Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee," according to one orator, not only had no real interest in the maritime issues that had supposedly led to war; they were also the authors of the Whiskey Rebellion and the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions of 1799. When the national capital was in the hands of truly disloyal men, it could not be disloyal to protest those who would ruin the Atlantic trade and expose the seaports to attack in order to augment territories more than a thousand miles away. The New Englanders who toasted four of their fellow Yankee states went on to raise their glass to "The state of Louisiana—The fifth wheel of a Waggon!" No expansive union worthy of the name could depend on the patriotism of these southern and western former rebels and their supporters. Active opposition to the war would ultimately "convince your rulers, that there exists, at least in New England, a redeeming spirit, able and willing to save the country."...



FURTHER READING

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