

London dictated how and by whom the king's provinces would be governed. Stung by the American revolt, British officials took measures to ensure that these colonies would not develop distinctive political institutions, values, and practices. Government followed the Tidewater model, only with imperial appointees standing in for the local gentry. Voting rights were extremely limited, and the press was tightly controlled. The actions of the elected legislative assemblies had to be approved by councils of crown-appointed grandees who served for life as well as by the crown-appointed governor and the imperial administration in London. The governor—always a Briton, never a colonial subject—could dissolve the local legislatures at any time, and his budget was not subject to their review. It was a system that, in the words of Ontario's first governor, aimed “ultimately to destroy or to disarm the spirit of democratic subversion.”<sup>8</sup>

Ontario, Québec, and the Maritimes were culturally distinct from one another, but they shared the experience of being controlled by a distant power. Another century would pass before any of them would reclaim control of their destiny.

## CHAPTER 14

### First Secessionists

**W**e've been taught to think of the ratification of the 1789 Constitution as the crowning achievement of the American Revolution. Most people living in the United States at the time, however, didn't see it in quite those terms.

Outside Tidewater and the Deep South, many were alarmed by a document they regarded as counterrevolutionary, intentionally designed to suppress democracy and to keep power in the hands of regional elites and an emerging class of bankers, financial speculators, and land barons who had little or no allegiance to the continent's ethnocultural nations. Indeed, the much-celebrated Founding Fathers had made no secret of this having been one of their goals. They praised the unelected Senate because it would “check the impudence of democracy” (Alexander Hamilton), and stop the “turbulence and follies of democracy” (Edmund Randolph), and applauded the enormous federal electoral districts because they would “divide the community,” providing “defense against the inconveniences of democracy” (James Madison).<sup>1</sup>

Many in Yankeeedom were not enthusiasts of the new United States. During the war the Yankee settlers of northeastern New York had seceded to form an independent republic called Vermont, governed by a constitution that banned slavery and property requirements for voting. Disgusted by the machinations of New York land speculators and new confederal policies that taxed poor people to bail out already wealthy war bond speculators, Vermont's leaders had refused to join the confederation. After the war they even tried to negotiate an alliance with Great Britain to safeguard their residents from the federal elite. Farmers in western Massachusetts and northwestern Connecticut, in turn, lobbied to have their territories annexed by the little mountain republic. Only after Alexander Hamilton pressured the New York land barons to settle their claims judiciously did Vermonters reluctantly agree to join the United States.

It was in Greater Appalachia that resistance to the constitutional changes was most intense. The new constitution trespassed on the Borderlanders' belief in natural liberty and overturned the radical 1776 constitution they'd forced on Pennsylvania. Effectively unrepresented at either the Continental Congress or the Constitutional Convention, Appalachian people regarded both bodies with considerable suspicion. Their representatives in Pennsylvania—the only state where Borderlanders had any real political power at the time—opposed ratification, and stormed out of the assembly when they learned Midlanders intended to force a statewide vote on the measure before copies of the proposed constitution had even reached the western counties. These delegates were later dragged out of their beds by a posse of “volunteer gentlemen,” taken to the assembly hall, and literally dumped into their seats to create the necessary quorum. Ratification passed in Pennsylvania only after Midlander postal authorities destroyed all anti-Constitutional newspapers, pamphlets, and letters they found in the mails; in the end, only 18 percent of eligible voters cast a ballot, most of them in the Midlands. In other states, Appalachian sections had few polling places, ensuring the turnout would be lower than in the elite-controlled Tidewater or Deep Southern sections. In 1789 Appalachian people were dead set against the creation of a strong, elite-controlled federal government. Many of them feel the same way today.<sup>2</sup>

The Borderlanders' uprisings were long dismissed as the thuggish behavior of backcountry louts too ignorant to understand the merits of taxation or the need to settle their debts. In reality, the Borderlanders weren't against taxation or creditworthy behavior but were resisting a scheme so corrupt, avaricious, and shameless it ranks with those of Wall Street in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

In the dark hours of the wars of liberation, the Continental Congress had no money to pay salaries to their soldiers or to compensate farmers for requisitioned food and livestock. Instead Congress gave all these people government IOUs. This practice continued for years until, under the financial administration of the notoriously unethical banker Robert Morris, the state of Pennsylvania announced it would no longer accept the congressional IOUs as payment for taxes. With no other form of money in circulation in much of the countryside, many poor families had no choice but to sell the notes for whatever they could get, and wealthy speculators purchased them

for one-sixth to one-fortieth of their face value. Soon just over 400 individuals held over 96 percent of Pennsylvania's war debt, and nearly half was controlled by just twenty-eight men, most of whom were Robert Morris's friends and business partners. Shortly thereafter, Morris and his protégé Alexander Hamilton took control of federal financial policy, rigging it so as to literally turn their friends' worthless paper into silver and gold. Under Morris and Hamilton, the federal government would buy back the bonds for face value, plus 6 percent interest, paid in precious metals raised by assessing new federal excise taxes designed to fall most heavily on the poor people who'd been forced to take the worthless congressional scrip in the first place.

But, wait—there's more. Most people in Appalachia hadn't seen hard cash in years. The closest thing to cash that Borderlander farmers could create was whiskey, which was nonperishable, marketable, and easy to transport. Knowing this, Morris and Hamilton cynically imposed a sharp tax on this all-important Appalachian product, even as they discouraged their underlings from collecting taxes owed by merchants on the coast. Meanwhile, they used their influence to give themselves and their private banker friends effective control over the new nation's currency supply—much of it printed by Morris's private Bank of North America—but with federal taxpayers on the hook to clean up their mess if things went wrong. It's also worth noting that Morris and Hamilton were both immigrants without ethnorregional allegiances; English-born Morris and West Indies-born Hamilton both saw North America as the British had: as a cow to be milked for all it was worth.<sup>3</sup>

But unlike in 1929 or 2008, the victims of this scheme were well aware of what was going on, and it was the people of Appalachia who resisted the federal elite's machinations most strongly. The greatest uprising that followed would come to be known, derisively, as the Whiskey Rebellion. But what it was really about was the fact that enlisted war veterans had gone unpaid and had been forced to sell the government's IOUs to pay government taxes, only to then be taxed again to allow vultures to make a 5,000 percent profit on their misery. Those taxes had to be paid in gold and silver, which nobody in the countryside had seen in years. When they couldn't pay, their farms and possessions would be seized and liquidated to further enrich Morris, Hamilton, and their speculator friends from the coastal nations.<sup>4</sup>

The Borderlanders didn't give up their farms or their individual God-given sovereignty without a fight. When confederal and federal authorities started trying to collect taxes and seize property, the Borderlanders took up arms and tried to leave the union they now thoroughly disapproved of. This Appalachian resistance movement raged for more than a decade and encompassed the highlands from the cultural heartland of Pennsylvania through the Appalachian sections of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and the future states of West Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. It began in 1784, when people in the western territories of North Carolina (now eastern Tennessee) became disgusted with Tidewater control. Their solution was pure Borderlander: they created their own sovereign State of Franklin on nobody's permission but their own. They drafted a constitution that prohibited lawyers, clergy, and doctors from running for office, set up a government in the village of Greeneville, and passed laws making apple brandy, animal skins, and tobacco legal tender. They even applied for membership in the Continental Congress and were supported by seven states; opposition from Tidewater and the Deep South delegates denied them the necessary two-thirds majority. Tidewater-controlled North Carolina forces invaded Franklin shortly thereafter, setting up a rival government and defeating local militia in a skirmish in what is now Johnson City, Tennessee, in 1788. The State of Franklin's leadership established communications with foreign officials in the Spanish-controlled lower Mississippi Valley, hoping to negotiate an alliance. But war soon broke out again with the Cherokee, driving the Borderlanders back under North Carolina's protection and ending their experiment in self-government.<sup>5</sup>

While the State of Franklin was being dismantled, Borderlanders throughout western Pennsylvania had cut their region off from the outside world. For nearly a decade, settlers had kept tax collectors, sheriffs, and federal officials out of their communities, cutting off the roads by various means: digging ditches, chopping down trees, diverting streams, provoking winter avalanches, and, in one case, creating a four-foot wall of manure. Government offices were burned in an effort to destroy records of debts. Citizen gangs attacked sheriffs, tax collectors, and judges; repossessed livestock, furniture, and tools taken by creditors; and freed neighbors from debtors' prisons. Many rebel communities created their own

militia units and, in at least one case, signed a pledge to "oppose the establishment of the new constitution at the risk of our lives and our fortunes."<sup>6</sup>

As Hamilton's 1790 whiskey tax began to force backcountry settlers into foreclosure, the Midlander-controlled state government passed a law prohibiting county officials from foreclosing on large land speculators' holdings. Borderlanders reacted to this latest outrage much as their Scots and Scots-Irish ancestors would have: they surrounded tax collectors and demanded they turn over their ledgers and any funds or valuables they had collected. If the collector refused, he would be beaten, tortured, or stripped naked, covered in searing hot tar, and rolled in feathers. The same fate befell law enforcement officers who tried to investigate.

By 1792 such tactics had been widely adopted by Borderlanders in Kentucky, Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas. As excise tax collection and property foreclosures in the region ground to a halt, emboldened Appalachian leaders started talking of bringing down the entire federal financial system. Finally Pennsylvanian Borderlanders proposed creating "a cordial union of the people west of the Allegheny Mountains" that would link them with their countrymen in western Maryland and what is now West Virginia and Kentucky.<sup>7</sup>

Convinced that state and federal officials were betraying the revolution, the Borderlanders initiated an outright rebellion. In August 1794 Appalachian Pennsylvanians formed an army of 9,000 men and marched on the Midlander city of Pittsburgh, threatening to burn it to the ground. Pittsburgh officials promptly surrendered and spared their town from destruction by ordering their militia to join the insurgency. A week later Borderlanders staged a regional independence congress in an open field nearby, with 226 delegates from western Pennsylvania and Virginia in attendance. The delegates raised a new flag with six alternating red and white stripes representing the four western counties of Pennsylvania and two in western Virginia. They discussed reaching out to Spain and Britain for protection. The northern Borderlands, it seemed, were on the verge of nationhood.

In the midst of the independence conference, the delegates learned that President Washington was on his way to crush them, riding at the head of an army of 10,000 well-armed troops recruited from the poorest strata of the Midlands and Tidewater. Faced with the likely prospect of military

defeat, the regional congress voted to submit to federal authority. Washington's army received a cold reception as it passed through the towns of central and western Pennsylvania, where people erected liberty poles—tall wooden flagstaffs that had been the symbol of Patriot allegiance during the Revolution—as signs of defiance. Still, no shots were fired, and by summer's end, the Borderlander insurgency had petered out.<sup>8</sup>

In Yankeeedom, by contrast, resistance died down quickly. For all their concerns about federal corruption, turn-of-the-century New Englanders had made a pleasant discovery: their nation had come to dominate the federal government.

With the retirement of Washington in 1796, the Electoral College of the United States chose John Adams to be the country's second president by an extremely close vote. Only half of the sixteen states then in existence chose their electors by popular vote, while the rest let their legislators appoint them. In both cases, however, electors followed regional trends. Adams, the quintessential Yankee, won every Yankee and New Netherland electoral vote and the vast majority of those of the Midlands. His rival, the gentleman planter Thomas Jefferson, swept the Deep South and Appalachia and the vast majority of Tidewater. In the end, Adams won 71 to 68.

Adams's presidency proved to be extremely controversial because, as historian David Hackett Fischer has observed, he attempted to force Yankee cultural and political values on the other nations. New Englanders believed that freedom belonged primarily not to the individual but to the community. Unfettered individual pursuit of absolute freedom and property accumulation, they feared, would destroy community ties, create an aristocracy, and enslave the masses, resulting in a tyranny along the lines of the British or the Deep South. To a civilization founded by people who believed they were God's chosen, protecting the common good meant maintaining internal conformity and cultural unity. Foreigners—whether Virginians, Irish, or African slaves—were considered a threat because they didn't share Yankee values, so immigration, religious diversity, and the importation of slaves were all actively discouraged in New England. “The grand cause of all our present difficulties,” Adams's nephew and personal secretary explained in 1798, was due to “so many hordes of foreigners immigrating to America.”<sup>9</sup>

While this belief system worked fairly well domestically, its policy implications were enormously threatening to the value systems of the other nations, leaving Adams to face a difficult presidency, which began in the midst of a geostrategic crisis. In 1789 the people of France had risen up in revolution, captured and beheaded their king, and declared themselves a republic. But their revolution had descended into chaos and terror, with state-enforced atheism, arbitrary arrests and executions, and, finally, a military coup by Napoleon Bonaparte. As Napoleon's armies spread across Europe, North Americans were caught up in fear and hysteria. Yankee newspapers reported that France was preparing a reconquest of its North American territories and that a 10,000-man invasion force was already assembling. Some 25,000 French refugees poured into the United States—most fleeing a successful slave rebellion in Haiti—triggering fears that they might be plotting with Napoleon.<sup>10</sup>

Amid the fear and xenophobia, Adams pushed through a package of legislation to crush dissent, enforce conformity, strengthen the courts, and drive out foreigners. Congress passed the infamous Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 by the slimmest of margins, with Yankees and Deep Southerners in favor, and Appalachian representatives deeply opposed. The acts granted the president the right to expel any foreigner or unnaturalized immigrant or to arrest anyone born in a hostile country at will. The acts also increased the number of years of residency required for citizenship from four to fifteen. Meanwhile, anyone who spoke, wrote, or published anything against the government, Congress, or the president that might bring them “into contempt or disrepute” or that might be considered “scandalous and malicious” would be subject to up to five years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. Two dozen people were arrested for sedition, including Philadelphia Quaker James Logan (for undertaking a peace mission to Paris), a number of critical newspaper writers and editors (for accusing Adams of overstretching his authority), and Vermont congressman Matthew Lyon (who subsequently relocated to Kentucky, where Borderlanders elected him to Congress four times).<sup>11</sup>

Yankees defended the acts, which were in accord with their concept of communal liberty. All citizens had the right to elect their own representatives, the thinking went, but once they did, they owed them their absolute deference—not just to the laws they passed but to everything they said or

did while in office. If they disapproved, they were to keep quiet until the next election, when they could vote in another candidate. "The government ought, especially in great measures, to be [sure] of the harmonious and cheerful cooperation of the citizens," Yale president Timothy Dwight explained in a 1798 sermon. "By putting power into the hands of their rulers, [the people] put it out of their own," another New England minister proclaimed. The Adams presidency, the Massachusetts legislature would later declare, "was the golden age of America."<sup>12</sup>

In the "War Fever of '98," many North Americans gave their support to their commander in chief and his draconian laws. Adams's party, the Federalists, even made electoral gains in Appalachia, whose people have supported every war the United States has ever fought once the fighting began, regardless of cause, opponent, or consequences. Deep Southern planters had no qualms about authoritarianism, and one of them, Robert Harper of South Carolina, even sponsored the sedition bill, deeming it necessary to stamp out subversives. Opponents were concentrated among the Tidewater gentry (who believed their own liberties were threatened by federal power) and the multiethnic, pacifistic Midlands. Thomas Jefferson and James Madison drafted resolutions against the acts that were passed by the Virginia and Kentucky legislatures; these denounced "the principle of unlimited submission" to the federal government and insisted that the states "are in duty bound" to prevent the United States from usurping their powers. The resolution's sponsor in the Virginia House, John Taylor of Tidewater's Caroline County, even advocated secession. Meanwhile, German-speaking farmers in southwestern Pennsylvania rebelled in 1799, accusing federal tax assessors attempting to collect a special war tax on property. The Midlanders broke colleagues out of jail, denounced Adams for seeking to "be a King of the Country," and hoisted signs declaring "No Gag Laws—Liberty or Death." Adams deployed federal troops to put down the protestors, whom he later dismissed as "miserable Germans, as ignorant of our language as they were of our laws."<sup>13</sup>

But Adams soon realized that suppressing dissent wasn't serving to strengthen the republic; rather, it had opened the door to the very aristocratic tyranny the New England Way had been engineered to prevent. The threat emerged within Adams's own administration, where Hamilton was consolidating military power as the effective head of the federal

army. His officers were interfering in elections, beating up civilians and even a federal congressman who didn't share their political opinions. Jefferson feared this "military enclave" might attack Virginia at any time, triggering a civil war. The threat of a federal military coup persuaded Adams to make a complete about-face in foreign policy, making peace with France and ending the war hysteria. He purged Hamilton and his associates from his cabinet, replacing them with New Englanders.<sup>14</sup>

With the threat of war removed, Appalachia promptly abandoned Adams, whose policies were otherwise completely at odds with their own values. Deep Southerners were furious at Adams, with South Carolina congressman Robert Harper privately hoping he would break his neck on the trip home to Massachusetts. Jefferson was relieved, although he remained upset that Adams had established diplomatic and commercial relations with the "rebellion Negroes" of Haiti. Even with the opposition operating under the shadow of the Sedition Acts, Adams was routed in the election of 1800, retaining only the support of Yankee electors. New England had lost control of the twelve-year-old federal government, and in only a few years' time, it would be trying to leave it altogether.<sup>15</sup>

For the next quarter century, the United States was dominated by the unstable coalition that brought down New England rule: Appalachia, the Midlands, New Netherland, Tidewater, and the Deep South put aside their differences to reject the New England ideal of "communal freedom" and internal conformity. These nations did their best to wipe away Adams's presidency by overturning his entire legislative agenda, including the Alien and Sedition Acts, the Bankruptcy Act of 1800, the Judiciary Act of 1801, and all of his new tax measures.

Under President Jefferson the federation embraced France, turned its back on Britain, and expanded westward, all of which contributed to alienating Yankeeedom. Allying with Bonaparte's atheistic, imperialistic regime was amoral, Yankees argued. Severing ties with Britain would only harm New England's commercial shipping fleet, undermining the region's economy. The rapid move west, they warned, was a dire threat to the republic.

The United States had already taken a great leap into the interior of the continent. During Washington's administration, the federal government

had taken possession of the former Indian territories comprising what is now Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, and Michigan. The creation of this so-called "Northwest Territory" had been accepted by New Englanders largely because they correctly recognized it would be largely settled by Yankees. Ownership of the first part to be colonized—the northern portions of the future state of Ohio—was split between the State of Connecticut (its so-called Western Reserve) and the Yankee-controlled Marietta Company. While some feared an exodus that would depopulate New England itself, most took pride in the opportunity to extend the Yankee nation, increasing its relative power over its competitors.

But President Jefferson's purchase of the 828,000-square-mile Louisiana Territory from France\* in 1803 was another matter altogether. The United States had suddenly acquired 50,000 Louisiana Creoles; a tropical enclave of New France where French and Spanish blended with blacks, Indians, and one another in the port of New Orleans; and French-speaking Acadians who practiced an idiosyncratic form of Catholicism in the swamps of the Mississippi's delta. Future congressman and Harvard College president Josiah Quincy warned that the transaction had "introduced a population alien to [U.S. constitutional principles] in every element of character, previous education, and political tendency" and unleashed "the opportunity and power of multiplying slave states, for which their climate was adapted." This would lead, Quincy warned, to the "ultimate predominance of slave power in the Union." These fears over an expansion of the Deep South deepened with Jefferson's annexation of the Spanish territories of west Florida (now the Florida Panhandle) and the Gulf coasts of Alabama and Mississippi) in 1810, leaving the slaveocracy free to expand all the way to the frontiers of Spanish Texas. In fact, Jefferson encouraged Deep Southerners to do so to ensure that lower Louisiana would be admitted as "an American, rather than a French state." Yankees like Boston merchant Stephen Higginson saw this all as confirmation of a Southern conspiracy "to govern and depress New England" and "secure the influence and safety of the south."<sup>16</sup>

\*Spain controlled the region from 1762 to 1800, when it was ceded to Napoleon's France.

Yankee influence over national affairs was increasingly compromised. As other states attracted immigrants or imported slaves, Massachusetts' share of the Union's tangible resources had sunk from second to fourth place between 1790 and 1813; by 1820 its population had fallen from second to fifth, behind even the new state of Ohio. The region wouldn't field a serious presidential candidate for a quarter century after Adams's defeat. With Yankeeedom in decline, New Englanders began to look on the election of 1800 as a "moral revolution proceeding from the vices and passions of men" and even a symbol of "God's displeasure." "God does not send a wicked ruler to a good people," one minister said in reference to Jefferson. "It demonstrates the wickedness of the nation." A hopeful alliance of "free republics," Congressman Samuel Thatcher warned, had been replaced by "a consolidated empire" and "the deep abyss of a frightful despotism." Saving the young republic, some prominent figures began muttering, might compel New England to leave the Union and create a free Northern Confederacy.<sup>17</sup>

The issue of Yankee secessionism moved to the mainstream after Congress passed an oppressive series of embargo acts in 1807 and 1808, which prohibited trade with foreign possessions. Yankees, who controlled most trade with Britain, the Maritimes, and the West Indies, saw it as a reprise of King George's Boston Port Bill and "the utmost streak of despotism." They compared Jefferson and his allies in Tidewater and the Deep South with Napoleon, whose empire the embargo benefited. They saw the people of Appalachia and the Midlands as democratic rabble poised to bring the French Revolution's terror to American shores. Shortly thereafter, British agents in New England reported talk of "an armed truce along the [Canadian] borders and even a Union with Great Britain." One recounted from Boston, "In a few months more of suffering and privation of all the benefits of commerce, the people of the New England States will be ready to withdraw from the confederacy [and] establish a separate government." Indeed, Massachusetts Senate president Harrison Gray Otis soon called for a regionwide convention to be held to find "some mode of relief that may not be inconsistent with the union of these [New England] states." (Recognizing the Yankee dominance of large swaths of New York, Otis considered inviting that state as well.) The *Boston Gazette* concurred: "It is better to suffer the amputation of a limb, than to loose the whole body.



We must prepare for the operation." Other newspapers carried reports that New England's political leaders were preparing "to form a northern confederacy, separate from the United States, in alliance with Great Britain, and eventually connected with Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and the Canadas."<sup>18</sup>

President James Madison's declaration of war against Great Britain in the spring of 1812 finally pushed Yankeeedom over the edge. Having effectively allied the federation with Napoleon, the Southerners had, in New England's view, completed their betrayal of the revolution and revealed their devotion to tyrannical empires. Massachusetts governor Caleb Strong immediately proclaimed a day of public fasting to atone for a war "against the nation from which we are descended, and which for many generations has been the bulwark of our religion." Strong and his counterparts in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Vermont all declined the president's requests to requisition state militia units, dismissing them as orders from the "little man in the Palace." Boston bankers refused to issue loans to the federal government. "We ought never to volunteer our services in a cause which we believe to be morally wrong," George Cabot declared. Lavish festivities were held in Boston to celebrate Russian and British victories over Napoleon's armies in Europe, and mobs tried to liberate captured British sailors when American privateers arrived in New England ports. The people of Newburyport, Massachusetts, began flying a modified American flag with only five stars and five stripes, one for each New England state.<sup>19</sup>

New Englanders also refused to fight their Canadian counterparts, particularly those in the Yankee-dominated Maritime provinces. When the federal government invaded Canada with the intention of forcing it into the Union, Yankees roundly condemned the action as an immoral war of imperial conquest. "We will give you millions for defense," said Congressman Morris Miller of (Yankee) Oneida County, New York. "But not a cent for the conquest of Canada—not a ninety-ninth part of a cent for the extermination of its inhabitants." New Englanders not only chose not to attack their Maritime neighbors, they declined to defend or attempt to liberate eastern Maine after British forces invaded in 1814. (New Brunswick and Nova Scotia militia, for their part, had refused to participate in the British action.) Governor Strong even sent an envoy to meet with his

counterpart in Nova Scotia to determine if Great Britain would give New Englanders military assistance if they attempted to secede from the United States. The answer from London, which arrived too late to affect events, was yes; the governor of Nova Scotia was authorized to sign a separate armistice with the Yankees and offer them "arms, accoutrements, ammunition, clothing, and naval cooperation."<sup>20</sup>

Yankee frustration culminated with a convention of New England leaders held in Hartford in December 1814. In the run-up to the meeting, John Lowell, scion of one of the region's most powerful families, called for delegates to draft a new federal constitution and offer membership only to the original thirteen states. The Revolutionary Era alliance would be restored on Yankee terms, and the uncouth Borderlander-settled territories beyond the mountains would be allowed to join Great Britain. Lowell's plan was extremely popular, and was backed by nearly all New England's newspapers. "We must no longer suffer our liberties to be made the sport of theorists . . . neither allow the region of the West, which was a wilderness when New England wrought the Independence of America, to wrest from us those blessings which we permitted them to share," the influential *Columbian Centinel* declared. "When we have once entered on the high road of honor and independence, let no difficulties stay our course, nor dangers drive us back." Even opposition papers admitted that a majority of Massachusetts' citizens supported secession. Proposals poured in to delegates calling for the seizure of federal customs houses and an end to conscription and the war.<sup>21</sup>

Standing on the brink, the conventioners themselves pulled back. After a series of secret meetings, they emerged with a list of proposed constitutional amendments to initiate negotiations with the federal government. The South would no longer be able to count three-fifths of its enslaved population when determining its representation in Congress—a measure that would have gutted Tidewater and Deep Southern political power, guaranteeing Yankee preeminence in the United States. The president would be limited to a single term and could not be succeeded by an individual from his own state, ending Virginia's near-lock on the office. Wars, trade embargos, and the admission of new states would hereafter require a two-thirds majority in Congress, effectively giving Yankeeedom veto power.

Massachusetts subsequently dispatched three commissioners to Washington to negotiate these terms.<sup>22</sup> But shortly after their arrival at the languid capital—where the White House and Capitol building had been burned by British troops—astonishing news broke that changed everything.

The British had signed a peace treaty and U.S. forces had defeated an invading British army in New Orleans. With the nation victorious, the Yankees' demands appeared preposterous and the Hartford conventioneers treasonous. The Yankees quietly dropped their demands while the rest of the country celebrated the gallant new war hero who'd saved the day at New Orleans. He was an Appalachian country lawyer from the old State of Franklin; fiery, bellicose, and profoundly un-Yankee, he was about to lead his long-neglected nation into the very heart of American power. His name was Andrew Jackson.

### PART THREE



# WARS FOR THE WEST

1816 to 1877