

THE JEFFERSONIAN EXPERIMENT AND ITS IRONIES

HISTORY 1100.3, DEC. 4-6, 2007

I. PRESIDENT JEFFERSON: AN EXPERIMENT IN "GOVERNING WITHOUT GOVERNMENT"

- ◆ **A. A Sentimental Democracy:** Jefferson's Inaugural Address defended the American "experiment" in non-authoritarian government and laid out the principles of the new administration.
- ◆ **B. The Revolution of 1800 in Political Culture**
 - 1. The anti-monarchical style of Jefferson's presidency: a quite inauguration, messy clothes & a mammoth cheese
 - 2. From "Fathers" to "Friends of the People," "Father of his Country" to the "People's Friend": political allegiance by mutual consent & affection
- ◆ **C. Domestic policy:** making the government smaller, cheaper, and less coercive.
 - 1. Dismantling the Federalist security program: expiration of Alien and Sedition Acts, abolition of direct tax, greater tolerance, cancellation of military build-up.
 - 2. Phasing out of Hamilton's financial system: debt would be paid off, B.U.S. allowed to expire in 1811.
- ◆ **D. A Democratic Foreign Policy**
 - 1. Main principles: Neutrality (preventing wars & need for large army/navy), small defense-only military (gunboats), free trade (max. markets for U.S. farmers).
 - 2. Primary goal in western hemisphere: Expansion of nation's agricultural land base, by acquiring new territory and clearing existing territory of Indians.
 - 3. Chief methods: negotiation and "peaceable coercion" (through commercial discrimination, as proposed in the 1790s: punishing nations that did not allow free trade, such as British, by restricting access to U.S. market).

II. JEFFERSONIAN EXPANSIONISM

- ◆ A. The Louisiana Purchase: Triumph of the Jeffersonian Style of Foreign Policy
 - 1. Accidental nature of the Purchase.
 - Main goal had been control of New Orleans and the Mississippi River.
 - Jefferson got worried when Spain, a weak power, gave Louisiana back to Napoleon's France in 1800.
 - Western Federalists urged war with Spain before French could take over Louisiana. TJ sent mission to buy New Orleans from France.
 - Losing interest in Americas because of French failure to reconquer their former colony Saint-Domingue (present Haiti), controlled by slave rebels, Napoleon offered to sell all of Louisiana for \$15 million.
 - 2. Jefferson hesitated because constitution did not grant power to buy new territory, but then accepted opportunity to meet his goal of expansion by peaceful means.
- ◆ B. The Louisiana Purchase and Jefferson's two-faced Indian policy
 - 1. Lewis and Clark as ambassadors to the far western Indians.
 - 2. Intended use of Louisiana: dumping ground for remaining Indians east of the Mississippi. Jefferson as the father of "Indian removal."
- ◆ C. Reactions to the Louisiana Purchase: The Northern Confederacy and the rise of New England sectionalism.

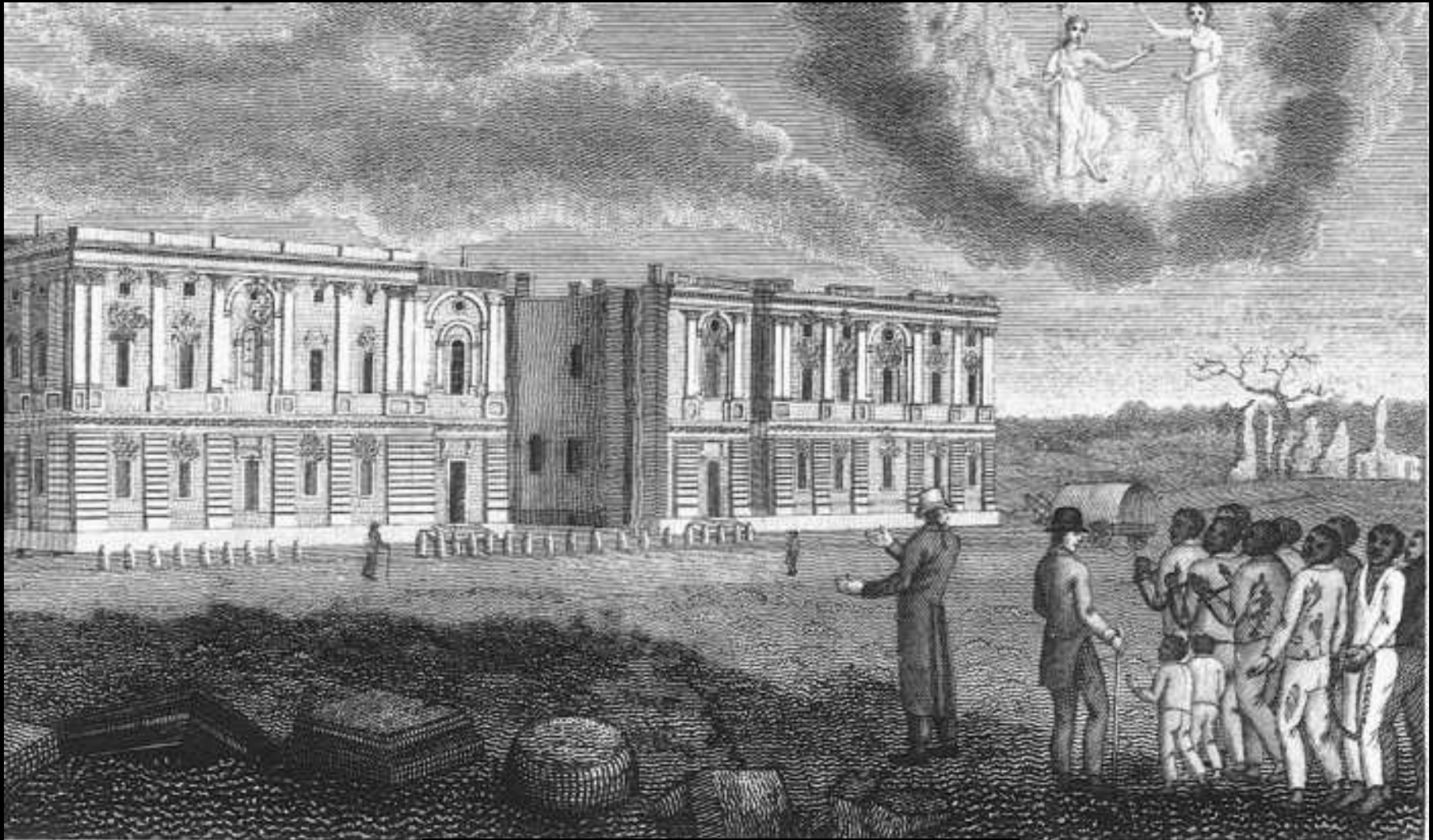
III. EMBARGO, WAR, & SLAVERY: IRONIES OF THE JEFFERSONIAN EXPERIMENT

- ◆ A. Jefferson's Embargo, 1807-1809: an experiment in "peaceable coercion" that grew less and less peaceable, more and more coercive.
 - 1. What was the Embargo? A total ban on trade with foreign countries.
 - Cause was British and French practice, worse than ever during Napoleonic Wars, of treating U.S. ships as enemies if they tried to trade or cooperate with the other power.
 - Followed example of Revolution-era trade boycotts: Europe (especially British) needed our food & money more than we needed their manufactured goods.
 - 2. Little impact on British or French, but threw commercial northeast U.S. into depression.
 - 3. Jefferson resorted to military force and progressively more repressive enforcement laws to make the Embargo work.
- ◆ B. Embargo's collapse eventually resulted in War of 1812, declared by U.S. against British under Jefferson's successor James Madison.
 - 1. War was humiliating stalemate in the North and East.
 - Failures included two failed U.S. invasions of Canada & a British invasion that burned Washington, D.C. (1814) before being stopped at Baltimore.
 - Hartford Convention (1814-15) met to consider secession by New England, but demanded special protections & end to 3/5 clause instead.
 - 2. Smashing successful war of conquest in the West and South, mostly against Indians, led by future presidents Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison.
- ◆ C. The War of 1812's Aftermath and the Revival of Slavery
 - 1. Origins of the Westward Movement: The Great Migration of 1815-1819
 - New states carved from Jackson and Harrison's Indian conquests: LA (1812), IN (1816), MS (1817), IL (1818), AL (1819).
 - Spurred westward movement of regional cultures, economic boom in sales of land & equipment to emigrants, expansion of banking to finance it all. Immediately sparked Missouri Crisis of 1819-21.
 - 2. Rescued slavery economically, put country on path to sectional crisis
 - Contrary to Jefferson's intentions, way was paved for a massive economic reinvigoration and expansion of plantation slavery and cotton growing. 1812, not cotton gin, was the catalyst.
 - Also expanded internal slave trade and launched new "middle passage" in which 100,000s of slaves were sent west ("sold down the river"). VA & other older states became slave exporters as prices rose.

IV. RESURGENT SLAVERY AND THE GROWTH OF SOUTHERN CULTURAL IDENTITY

- ◆ A. The Cotton Boom and the Intensification of Southern Cultural Differences
 - 1. Dimensions: half of exports were cotton; richest U.S. counties were in cotton south.
 - 2. Reorganization of the national economy around cotton: Hemp growing in the upper south and textile manufacturing in New England.
 - 3. Slavery was now expanding rather than fading away as Founders expected.
- ◆ B. The Old South as a Neo-Patriarchal Society: social trends thwarted or reversed
 - 1. Problem: Need to find some justification for expanding slavery in face of egalitarian American values and outside criticism.
 - Planters could not forget that slaves did not want to be slaves and would escape or resist if they could: Necessity of harsh police laws (slave patrols), violence and coercion (whipping) to keep slaves in bondage.
 - 2. Development of the Proslavery Argument (“slavery as a positive good”)
 - Planter paternalism: Plantation slavery increasingly seen as a *better* system than northern individualism & capitalism. Chattel slavery as more humane than “wage slavery.”
 - Scientific racism: claim that, as inferior beings, Africans did not qualify for human rights and actually benefited from slavery because of the chance to learn civilized values & knowledge from whites
 - 3. Acutely aware of how fragile the slave system really was, southern men worked to suppress opposition & even debate on slavery in North and South
 - After Nat Turner rebellion (1831) & Virginia slavery debate (1832-33), virtually no criticism of slavery was allowed in South and slave codes, including manumission, greatly tightened, reversing earlier reforms.
 - Attack on Charleston post office in response to abolitionist mailings and successful pressure to have them banned, 1835-36.
 - “Gag rule” in Congress against anti-slavery petitions, 1837-44.
 - 4. South as the last refuge of petty patriarchy, men ruling extended households and local communities, offering enormous psychological power to white men of all classes.
 - Hyper-manly culture of southern “honor” authorized men to defend their absolute authority with as much violence as necessary, hypocritically celebrating the purity of white women and (their “chivalrous” treatment of them) while sexually abusing slave women all they wanted.
 - Though southern system hurt non-slaveholding whites as much as anyone [poverty, political oligarchy, lack of social institutions], racism & slavery allowed even poor white men to think of themselves as patriarchs and honorable colleagues of the planter elites, despite vast differences in power and wealth among whites (larger than in North).

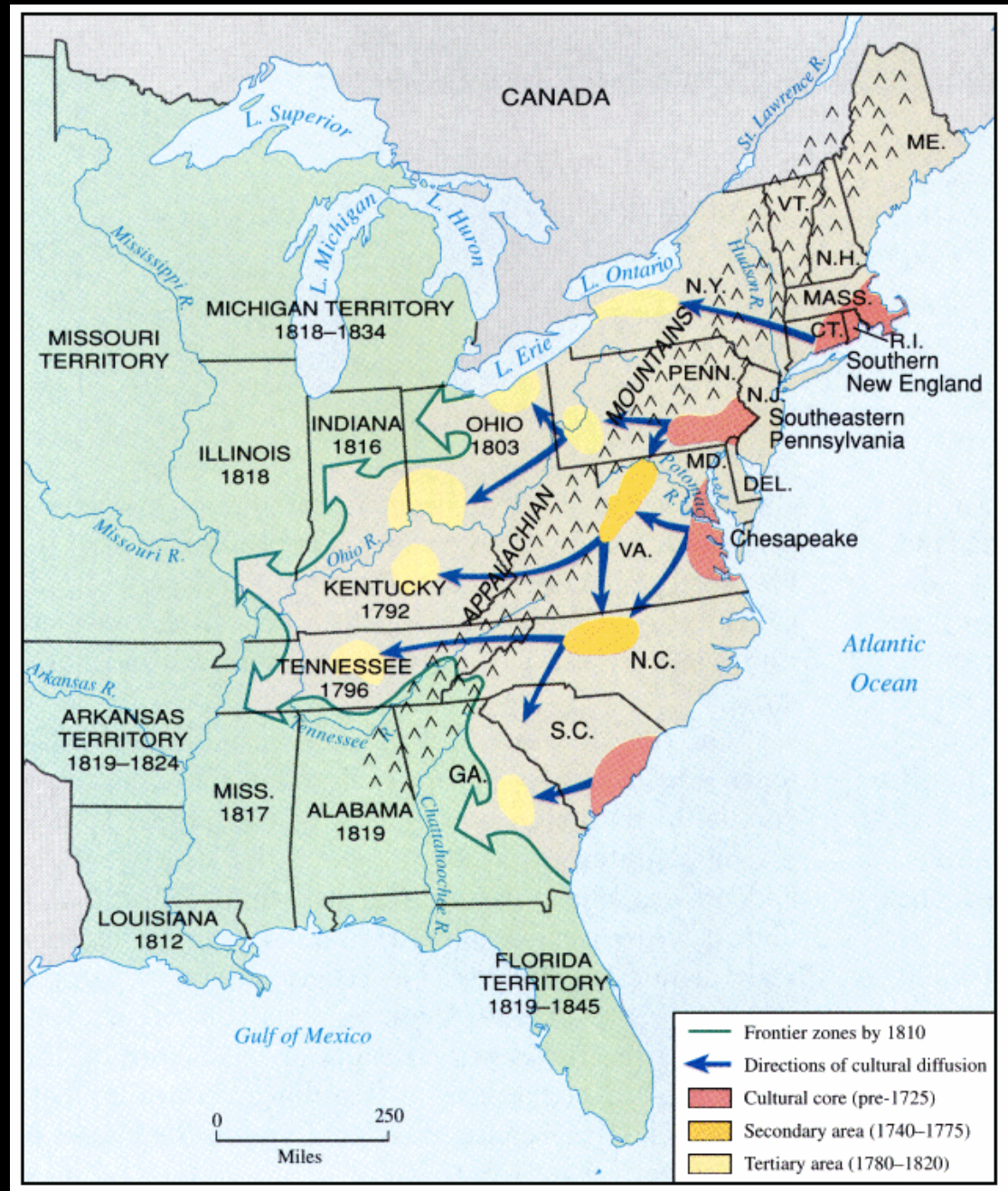
ANTI-SLAVERY VIEW OF THE WAR OF 1812



Capitol burns while slaves & angels
look on with approval.



NEW WESTERN STATES AND THE WESTWARD MOVEMENT OF REGIONAL CULTURES



U.S. CONQUEST OF THE TRANS- APPALACHIAN INDIANS



SPREAD OF SLAVERY, 1790-1860

