
The Bicentennial Celebration of the Northwest Ordinance, as well as that of the Constitution, has suffered from several currents in contemporary thought. A considerable body of scholars has followed the Civil Rights activist-historians of the sixties in rewriting United States history from points of view outside the traditional political and constitutional mainstream; although one or another of the Founding Fathers may still gain some credit for contributing to the unshackling of humankind, the intellectual elite now has a disenchanted attitude toward the formation and expansion of the American Republic. These dissidents, exposers, and reformers nevertheless work within the philosophy of self-evident individual rights first established by the Founding Fathers as a basis for government.

There is no turning back to the messianic patriotism of George Bancroft or the democratic exceptionalism of Frederick Jackson Turner. It is a sign of the times that Turner's once-potent writings on the early West are barely echoed in this book. What this Bicentennial Handbook offers instead is a calm, serious, thoughtful, and informed account of the Northwest Ordinance. The document appears at the heart of the book, interleaved with lucid explanatory essays by several expert contributors. It appears again in a handsome facsimile of the original, on the back of the richly illustrated map of the Old Northwest supplied as a removable insert. Three gracefully written essays further explain the Ordinance. Andrew R. L. Cayton's "The Northwest Ordinance from the Perspective of the Frontier" considers Indians, French settlers, white trappers, and subsistence farmers as gathered in a pre-modern system friendly to people and the environment—a challenging view, clearly informed by those recent currents mentioned above. Robert M. Taylor demonstrates that the men who actually sat in the Continental Congress in that summer of 1787 were distinguished by a wide experience of public service. They hardly deserved the odious comparisons often drawn between them and the Fathers of Philadelphia. Patrick J. Furlong contributes a concise history of the working of the Ordinance, quite properly giving most details about the very first administration, that of Arthur St. Clair. Although hardly revisionist, this essay makes a better case for the first territorial governor than one usually sees.
The illustrations include portraits, newspaper stories, various contemporary scenes, and a photograph of the seal of the Northwest Territory. The eighteen maps (in addition to the folded enclosure) are delightful and instructive. Paper and printing are of exceptional quality, and a rich rust-red ink complements the black in this handsome, yet inexpensive book. Best of all it provides an informed and accurate account of a crucial process in early national history.

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Andrew R. L. Cayton has transformed land speculators, commercial entrepreneurs, and political opportunists into a second generation of Founding Fathers by sketching the political history of the territory and then state of Ohio on the canvas of revolutionary ideology. The "remarkable ideological consistency" which the author finds in early Ohio politics extends the themes of Gordon Wood under whom Cayton first wrote this work as a dissertation. The thesis or "fundamental issue was always the location of sovereignty, or the source of power, in a rapidly developing frontier society. The Federalists had tried to place it in the national government; the Jeffersonian Republicans . . . insisted that sovereignty belonged to the people" (p. 102).

Ohio moved from territory to state, and its socioeconomic situation changed substantially over the decades. But, according to Cayton, the tracks of political rhetoric remained rutted. In an effort to promote the general welfare, Federalists, Moderate Republicans, and National Republicans in turn favored different kinds and amounts of governmental control over the actions of individuals. Republicans, Regular Republicans, and Jacksonian Republicans argued for autonomous individualism on the presumption that the unfettered pursuit of personal interest would result in a natural harmony.

The fortunes of the parties shifted. Federalists dominated Ohio's government during its territorial period. Jefferson's election as president in 1800 paved the way for Ohio's statehood under Republicans. By 1807, the Republicans began to argue over a new manifestation of the same ideological issue that had earlier separated Jeffersonians from Federalists. Harmony returned by 1812 on