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# WILLIAM BLOUNT AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SOUTHWEST TERRITORY, 1790 - 1791

By William H. Masterson

Page	
UTHWEST	3
.....	32
1850-1860	46
.....	58
72:	77
.....	97
NS FROM THE	115
.....	136
NTY, 1802	142
.....	146
.....	148
.....	149
.....	153

The opening months of the year 1790 were crowded ones for North Carolina men of affairs. The successful if bitter fight for the adoption of the new federal constitution at last successfully over, the new situation abounded in political and economic opportunities. A host of new offices dazzled the eyes of the politically ambitious, while vistas of safer trade and more lucrative and widespread speculation in land or paper enticed the interest of business men.

Among those most deeply interested in these new possibilities was William Blount, of Greenville, North Carolina, for whom twenty-five years of intense interest and activity in economics and politics were approaching a climax. Trained in the complexities of business in the colonial and revolutionary periods, he was by 1790 the owner of several farms, a number of slaves, town lots, and saw and grist mills. Likewise, as a partner of his brothers in the thriving mercantile firm of John Gray and Thomas Blount, he was part owner of stores, ships, and wharves, and was thoroughly familiar with the complexities of paper money exchange, and with the usages of interstate and international commerce.<sup>1</sup> Above all, like most other successful business men of his day, he was a past master of speculation in paper and land. He had practiced speculation in paper money throughout the tumultuous days of Revolutionary finance, when, as a Continental Army paymaster and a private speculator, he had bought, sold, and traded in the wildly fluctuating and chaotic currencies of that inflationary period. Likewise in the enthralling game of land speculation he was not lacking in experience. Having traded in that commodity since the seventies, William Blount and his brothers had acquired vast tracts both in their home state and in Georgia and South Carolina, but since the middle 1780's their interest had been increasingly drawn to North Carolina's western lands. Armed with cash and credit from their mercantile business, the Blounts had plunged headlong into the western land speculation which had so absorbed North Carolina leaders since the earliest days of statehood. In this activity they were aided by valuable western friends, such as James Robertson, John Sevier, Daniel Smith, and a score of other leaders who were grateful for past political

<sup>1</sup>For the earlier career of William Blount, see Alice B. Keith, *Three North Carolina Blount Brothers in Business and Politics* (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1940), *passim*, and William H. Masterson, *Business Man in Politics: The Public Career of William Blount* (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1950), 1-159.

favours. Thus, by 1790 the Blounts owned literally tens of thousands of acres in the west, and their interest in that area, active since their participation in Richard Henderson's Transylvania purchase in 1775, had become paramount in their minds.<sup>2</sup>

With the eventual adherence of North Carolina to the new Union, the Blounts were among the most interested in observing the new political scene. Since 1781 William Blount had served various terms in the state assembly. As a member of committees on soldiers' claims, on paper money, on western lands, and on petitions from the western country he had made a name as a champion of that section. He had fought to save Sevier from the political effects of the Franklin movement, to obtain the cession of the western area to the central government, to establish roads, counties, and judicial districts in that area, to recognize western leaders by the gift of offices and responsibility, in short, to interest the politician, the homeseeker, and the investor in the trans-montane region.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile on the national scene he had served in the old Confederation Congress; and in the Constitutional Convention of 1787 he had helped frame the new national government, for whose adoption he had worked incessantly in Carolina. By 1790, therefore, William Blount was known to all prominent Carolinians as a Federalist of western sympathies, and he had both powerful friends and bitter enemies. Thus, he had recently been defeated for his untimate goal, the national Senate; but his successful rival for the seat, Benjamin Hawkins, was a long-time personal friend.

Prominent and active, therefore, in both political and economic affairs, William Blount wasted no time in regretting his defeat in the senatorial election, but continued in the busy stream of his business life. He was by 1790 shaken by both a "big Ague" and a "little one," both contracted from years of lowland residence; also his travel and exposure in the unusually severe winter of 1789-90 brought on a racking cough. But nothing could slow ambition-driven activity. His father's estate had to be divided, a Blount cargo sent off to Ireland, plans made with John Gray Blount to build a warehouse and platform at Ocracoke Inlet, a defense planned for suits against the firm, and care taken to have the trial before a friendly judge. Blount covered counties on horseback or in carriage to collect debts, to buy corn (the crop selected by the firm for an attempted local monopoly), to attend surveys at Wilmington, to inquire for runaway slaves, or to explore market prices. He suggested to his brothers another voyage to smuggle turpentine into Jamaica, and speculated in futures in alum, salt, and coffee.

Also, with the west soon to be securely in federal hands, Blount's activity in the land market continued at its high rate. Through his western

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 33, 121, 131 ff.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 122, 128, 130, 140-44, 152, 155-56.

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<sup>4</sup>Ben. Hawk March 1, 1790; Collection, P. C.

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agent, Charles Gerrard, came a favorable report from James Robertson, "but one killed since I left there and the immigrants upwards of 800; the price of land rising." From New York Blount's close friend Hugh Williamson wrote that their long planned new map and prospectus of the western country were nearly ready, and that the bill for the government of the ceded territory was halfway through Congress. These two events occurring together, he wrote, "must affect the public mind and turn the current of migrations toward Tennessee."<sup>4</sup>

At this stage, Blount's land transactions took two forms. The first was regroupment and accounting. After some search, a buyer was found for all the Blount lands in Georgia, and William travelled to the land office at Hillsboro to settle accounts. Here he found 2,760 entries in the Blount name, for which he made arrangements to pay. He also obtained warrants of survey for 97,000 acres which the Blounts had already entered in partnership with John Donelson, and William now gave orders to Stockley Donelson for the surveying.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, Blount continued his ceaseless activity in land acquisition and sale. Alone or in the firm, in his own name or in that of others, in North Carolina or the western country, buying, renting and selling, he lengthened the record of his involved and often tortuous dealings.<sup>6</sup> As usual in a day when private and public business transactions were often linked, the "friendly services" of officials were most helpful. State Treasurer John Haywood loaned money and certificates from the treasury and delayed tax collection. Secretary of State James Glasgow, a close personal friend, issued warrants generously and, as later events were to show, carelessly. Even the friendship of the upright William Davie was of assistance, and reports from friends in Congress were of great value. In turn, Blount, observing that Entry-Taker John Armstrong was still under a public scrutiny which might discover the Blount accounts unpaid, and that "we had drawn money from the Treasury," protected himself and friends by paying up the Blount

<sup>4</sup>Ben. Hawkins to Wm. Blount, February 11, 1790; Chas. Gerrard to Wm. Blount, March 1, 1790; H. Williamson to J. G. Blount, April 16, 1790, John Gray Blount Collection, P. C. 841, 842, 843 (North Carolina Historical Commission, Raleigh). This collection is hereafter referred to as J. G. B.

<sup>5</sup>Memorandum of William Blount, April 9, 1790; Wm. to J. G. Blount, April 17, 1790, *ibid.*, P. C. 883, 843.

<sup>6</sup>J. G. Blount to Jno. Strother, n. d.; Certificate of George Doherty, April 9, 1790, *ibid.*, P. C. 905, 883; Pitt County Deed Book, Book M, 341 (Greenville, N. C.); Craven County Deed Book, Book 27, pp. 338, 339 (New Bern, N. C.); Davidson County Deed Book, Book E, 125, Book 73, pp. 386, 429 (State Land Office, Raleigh); Beaufort County Deed Book, Book 6, p. 138, Book 14, p. 134 (Washington, N. C.). Although North Carolina had closed her Hillsboro office for western lands in 1784, legal provisions for transfers and generous grants by the legislature kept the land office officials busy. Also, surveyors had entered enormous tracts before 1784, and these were now for sale. For example, William wrote John Gray on April 17, 1790, that there remained in the land office warrants in five thousand acre tracts to the amount of 250,000 to 300,000 acres, of which Donelson had offered 15,000 to the Blounts, J. G. B., P. C. 843.

debts. He did so, however, in certificates and with the understanding that if the national assumption bill should be passed he might redeem them at their depreciated value in order to cash them in for his own profit.<sup>7</sup>

In early 1790, however, another interest rivalled the land lure to the Blounts. This was speculation in money. The proposal of the national assumption of state debts had filled North Carolina with swarms of speculators, and upon meeting one of these, a buyer for a northeastern syndicate, William Blount was intrigued to discover the possibility of buying on credit for two shillings to the pound state certificates which might later be redeemed at eight shillings to the pound. At once he entered into a partnership with other business men by which the Blount firm obligated itself to buy £10,000 worth of military certificates. From Cumberland William Blount's land agent, James Robertson, sent certificates collected on credit from the frontiersmen, and Absalom Tatum purchased paper from the uninformed westerners for the well-informed Blounts, while agent Gerrard "put his time against our horse" to collect paper in Carolina proper, and from New York associates Abishai Thomas and Hugh Williamson came a stream of advice on Congressional trends.<sup>8</sup>

Yet, however absorbed William Blount became in his multitudinous business projects, his keen interest in political events never lessened. Immediately after the state's adoption of the new frame of government, his attention was fixed on the elections to Congress. He observed with keen pleasure the success of his friends John Ashe, John Steele, Williamson, and Sevier, who were among the state's first congressmen, and his own defeat for the Senate by Hawkins did not lessen, on the latter's part at least, their friendship. Indeed, it would seem that the possibility of a coveted federal appointment in the west for his friend was early in the new Senator's mind. Immediately after laying the cession before Congress, Hawkins asked Blount:

write me freely and confidentially on any of your prospects. I have had occasion to name you once or twice in a manner as you deserve. We shall be embarrassed with the Indian business and shall want some very confidential man in that quarter.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Wm. to J. G. Blount, March 22, 26, April 17, 1790; Jno. Haywood to J. G. Blount, March 15, 1790; Jas. Glasgow to J. G. Blount, February 22, April 15, 1790; Ben. Hawkins to Wm. Blount, February 6, 11, 1790, *ibid.*, P. C. 842, 843, 842, 841, 843, 841; Comptroller's Vouchers, XVIII, 245, 246 (North Carolina Historical Commission).

<sup>8</sup>Thos. Stewart to J. G. Blount, March 30, 1790; Thos. Blount to J. G. Blount, February 22, March 27, 1790; Abishai Thomas to J. G. Blount, March 12, May 5, 17, 1790; Hu. Williamson to J. G. Blount, February 24, March 12, April 16, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 842, 843, 841, 842. For a discussion of North Carolina's paper money issues, see Adelaide L. Fries, "North Carolina Certificates of the Revolutionary War Period," *North Carolina Historical Review* (Raleigh), IX (1932), 229-41.

<sup>9</sup>Ben. Hawkins to Wm. Blount, February 6, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 841. The naming

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Williamson, too, kept his friend informed concerning the progress of legis-lation on the new cession, and on possibilities for personal advancement. As a result of this assistance, by the end of March, 1790, Blount announced himself "assured" that he would be appointed governor of the ceded ter-ritory.<sup>10</sup>

This post had been in the speculator's mind at least since the state's cession in November, and, with his defeat for the United States Senate, it became his principal ambition. The vast extent of the western land he held for sale, the power of treaty-making vested in federal officials, the need to keep western taxation low in his own interest, as well as a really unselfish interest in the west and its people all were powerful motives in fixing his attention on the new post. Also, having been in the old Congress when the Ordinance of 1787 passed, he was familiar with the power and prestige thereby conferred on a territorial governor, and William Blount loved power. For all these reasons, therefore, he had watched with keen interest as Con-gress accepted the cession on April 2, 1790, and on May 26 established a government for "The Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio."<sup>11</sup>

The coveted prize was not, however, to be his without a struggle. Patrick Henry of Virginia, deep in land speculation, urged his own candi-dates. One of these was George Mason, the other Henry's agent and friend, Joseph Martin. Mason, though, had no arresting military record and no connection with North Carolina. Martin had spent his adult life in the west and given his best services for the preservation of peace and good relations with the Indians, but this very activity hurt his cause. With the approval of Henry he had corresponded with the ominous Alexander McGillivray in order to placate that potent chieftain. These letters were now produced by his enemies and rivals, especially George Mathews of Georgia and Sevier, to support charges of treason. Furthermore, though a speculator himself, Martin's efforts to bring peace to the west had shown a regard for the

"as you deserve" may well have been to Washington, by whom Hawkins was already held in high esteem. The embarrassing "Indian business" probably refers to the continual white encroachments, despite the treaties of Hopewell, and also to the Yazoo sales. Ben. Hawkins to Wm. Blount, February 11, 1790, *ibid.* In quoted material some clarifying changes in punctuation have been made.

<sup>10</sup>Hu. Williamson to J. G. Blount, April 6, 1790, *ibid.*, P. C. 843; A. MacLaine to J. Iredell, March 31, 1790, Griffith J. McRee, *Life and Correspondence of James Iredell*, 2 vols. (New York, 1857-58), II, 286.

<sup>11</sup>Clarence E. Carter (ed. and comp.), *The Territorial Papers of the United States* (Washington, 1934—), IV, 13-17, 18-19. Whether or not the Southwest Territory included the twelve-mile-wide strip ceded by South Carolina in 1787 is not clear. It would appear that Congress forgot the strip when it created the Territory in 1790, but remembered it in 1796. One writer believes that the strip never, in fact, existed. Cf. P. J. Treat, *The National Land System, 1785-1820* (New York, 1910), 343, and Samuel C. Williams, "The Admission of Tennessee into the Union," *Tennessee His-torical Quarterly* (Nashville), IV (1945), 309.

Indians intolerable to many settlers and speculators. Hence, in spite of efforts in his behalf by Edmund Randolph, R. H. Lee, William Grayson, Theodorick Bland, and even Jefferson, the ex-Indian agent was passed over.<sup>12</sup>

Two other formidable names appeared in opposition. Anthony Wayne hungrily eyed "this immense and valuable country" as a "vastly superior" field for national speculation, and sought Congressman Aedanus Burke's aid in securing the appointment.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, in the Territory one name led all the rest in popular appeal. A convention called for the purpose besought the powerful influence of Samuel Johnston in securing the western governorship for "the Honorable John Severe [Sevier]." This convention assured the Senator-elect "in the name of the People . . . that no other man upon the Continent the Presidente of the United States (not excepted)—can give as general satisfaction to the People of this Country in that office. . . ." Moreover, so likely did Sevier's success appear that North Carolina's Judge Samuel Spencer, seeking appointment to a territorial bench, applied to him for patronage.<sup>14</sup>

Faced with this rivalry, Blount mustered every resource. He wrote to his friend, Congressman Steele, and frankly solicited aid. From the western country leading figures such as General Daniel Smith also wrote to congressmen in Blount's behalf. In Congress, Ashe, Timothy Bloodworth, Hawkins, and Williamson united in urging his appointment.<sup>15</sup> To combat charges of land speculation, Williamson wrote disarmingly to President Washington in his friend's behalf:

It is true that Mr. Blount has a considerable Quantity of Land within the ceded Territory, but he has none to the Southward of it, and he must be the more deeply interested in the Peace and Prosperity of the new Government. Perhaps it is because I have many Relations and some Land there, given me by the State, that I am the more anxious to see it prosper.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup>James Phelan, *History of Tennessee* (Boston, 1888), 148; J. G. M. Ramsey, *The Annals of Tennessee* (reprinted, Chattanooga, 1926), 541; correspondence between Grayson, Lee, Martin, and Henry, September, 1789-June, 1790, in W. W. Henry, *Patrick Henry: Life, Correspondence, and Speeches*, 3 vols. (New York, 1891), III, 387, 390, 407-15, 420-21; Stephen B. Weeks, "General Joseph Martin and the War of the Revolution in the West," American Historical Association, *Annual Report*, 1893 (Washington, 1894), 456-60, 465-69; H. Knox to Joseph Martin, September 11, 1790, Draper Manuscripts, 2XX36 (Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison); L. Draper and William Martin correspondence, May-July, 1846, *ibid.*, 3XX54 (2), 3XX55 (1), 3XX56 (2); Oliver Taylor, *Historic Sullivan* (Bristol, Tenn., 1909), 18.

<sup>13</sup>A. Wayne to Aedanus Burke, June 4, 1789, Wayne Manuscripts, XIX, 81 (Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia).

<sup>14</sup>Memorial of citizens of the ceded area, May 5, 1790, Hayes Library, Edenton, Johnston Collection (typed copy in North Carolina Historical Commission); S. Spencer to John Sevier, February 24, 1790, Draper MSS., 16DD28.

<sup>15</sup>Wm. Blount to John Steele, April 18, 1790, H. M. Wagstaff (ed.), *The Papers of John Steele*, 2 vols. (Raleigh, 1924), I, 57; Wm. Blount to Daniel Smith, September 6, 1790, Miscellaneous MSS., B129 1/2 (Tennessee State Archives, Nashville); T. Bloodworth to the President, June 5, 1790; John B. Ashe to the President, June 5, 1790; Jefferson's Memorandum [1790], Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 21-23.

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Unlike Wayne, Blount was a native of the state which had ceded the land. Unlike Sevier, he was untainted by Franklinism and by Indian massacre. He had a military and a Federalist record, and he knew President Washington from Convention days, if not earlier. He was thoroughly familiar with western affairs and leaders, and among the latter he was respected for his pro-western activities in the assembly. His influence, therefore, in calming a turbulent and somewhat Anti-Federal west would be enormous. Except for Senator Samuel Johnston, who was silent, and Sevier, who was absent, he had the unanimous recommendation of his state's delegation in Congress. In short, his qualifications were very impressive to the Administration, and he was appointed on June 8, 1790, to the position of governor of the Southwest Territory and superintendent of Indian affairs for the southern department.<sup>17</sup> With him were named the influential Daniel Smith as secretary and David Campbell and John McNairy as judges. With both Smith and McNairy, especially the latter, Blount's relations had been close and cordial.

The eagerly anticipated news of his appointment reached Blount at home about June 26, and he and his friends rejoiced. Steele was happy,

not that I suppose the Office a great acquisition, or that it will add any dignity to his character more than he is otherwise entitled to, but that it will put him out of the reach of and raise him above, his enemies. . . . I conceive it a great point gained to our landholders, that the business of an Indian boundary will fall into the hands of a man, of all others the most proper.<sup>18</sup>

Williamson's mind was

relieved from any anxiety respecting our Western Territory. . . . I am now only to consider how the current of Migration shall best be turned towards the Tennessee Government so . . . the value of our land may be improved or increased.<sup>19</sup>

Blount rejoiced "at it myself for I think it of great Importance to our Western Speculations." Apart from "being delivered from my state Enemies," he regarded the "appointment itself" as

truly important to me; more so in my opinion than any other in the Gift of the President could have been. The Salary is handsome and my Western Lands had become so great an object to me that it had become absolutely necessary that I should go to the Western

<sup>12</sup>Hu. Williamson to the President, May 28, 1790, *ibid.*, 19-20. The "none to the Southward" refers to the fact that Blount did not participate in the first Yazoo purchases.

<sup>17</sup>A. P. Whitaker, *The Spanish-American Frontier, 1783-1795* (Boston, 1927), 120-21; Ramsey, *Annals*, 541, 545-46. The importance of congressional recommendations at that time is noted in Gaillard Hunt, "Office Seeking During Washington's Administration," *American Historical Review* (New York), I (1894), 270-83.

<sup>18</sup>Jno. Steele to J. G. Blount, July 10, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 844.

<sup>19</sup>Hu. Williamson to J. G. Blount, June 15, 1790, *ibid.*, P. C. 843.



Country to secure them and perhaps my Presence might have enhanced there value. I am sure that my present appointment will.<sup>20</sup> Even his senatorial defeat brightened in retrospect. "May it not be said that Jo McDowell and his Friends have rendered me essential Service?"

Exultantly, then, the speculator prepared to assume his new post and to develop its opportunities. His pride was justified—he had played his hand well to win the prize. At forty-one years of age he found at hand place, power, and profit, three guiding stars of his life. The future was unlimited.

But despite his fair prospects, the new appointee had problems to overcome before duties could be met. At home his wife, dark, vivacious Mary Grainger ("Molsey"), wept and spoke of Indian perils and of the desolation of his absence, for she refused to take the children to the new and dangerous frontier. A dozen business deals required closing transactions. For the trip and to support his new dignity money would be needed. Two good horses, saddles, bridles, portmanteau, clothing for himself and slave, and travelling money all had to be acquired, and he, like most business men of that specie-scarce era, was "without a copper." Of knowledge of the legal necessities and procedures he was equally destitute, for although his commission arrived July 6, there was not a copy of the territorial act or the Ordinance of 1787 to be had, nor advice on the procedure of qualifying or setting his government in motion.

Fearful lest he be ordered west too soon, and still shaken by recurring chills and fever, Blount attacked his problems energetically. To John Gray Blount went orders, backed by the prospect of a hard money salary, for a portmanteau to be ordered from Philadelphia, broadcloth and nankeen for his wardrobe, and "Toe cloth" and "milled drab" for his slave's. The horses and their equipage were also ordered, and elaborate plans made to raise cash for the trip.<sup>21</sup> To close his varied accounts, Blount followed the judges on circuit to Hillsboro, Edenton, New Bern, and Wilmington, for although his legal business was small, the court sessions brought together the business men of the neighborhoods. He collected credits due and sold slaves to pay for his most pressing obligations, including those to state officials. He attempted by various means, including alterations in the map, to induce Wilson Blount to select his part of their joint western land holdings so as to leave William Blount's clear for future operations, and for the same purpose he balanced the Blount land and financial accounts with other partners. Meanwhile the persuasive powers of John Gray were invoked to reconcile "Molsey" to her husband's absence "so absolutely necessary to

<sup>20</sup>Wm. Blount to Jno. Steele, July 10, 1790, Wagstaff (ed.), *Steele Papers*, I, 67-68.

<sup>21</sup>Wm. to J. G. Blount, June 26, 29, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 843.

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<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*; W I, 67-70; Dav cellaneous lett 845, 881, 833, Carolina Hist B., P. C. 844.

<sup>23</sup>Jacob to 31, 1790; Wm 19, 1790, *ibid.*

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<sup>25</sup>Wm. Bl State Archive Farragut, who companied his account of G Farragut," E 81-85.

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G. B., P. C. 843.

her Interest as well as her Friends."<sup>22</sup> Yet with all these hurried preparations the speculator found time for another plunge in the certificate market, selling to some associates a part of those certificates sent to him by Robertson from Mero District, and exchanging the rest for paper likely to be assumed by the national government, and therefore of greater potential value.<sup>23</sup>

During these busy weeks Blount through Williamson in Congress kept in contact with the Administration's negotiations with McGillivray. By the same means in August he obtained copies of the congressional act on his territory and information on procedure for establishing his government. At Hillsboro he found time to engage the services of printer Robert Ferguson, who with George Roulstone, editor of the *Fayetteville Gazette*, agreed to cross the mountains as soon as possible with their press.<sup>24</sup>

At length, in early September, Blount began his trip westward, stopping at Governor Martin's Guilford County home in order to secure final confirmation of all his land titles in the form of grants signed by the Governor. Here, however, he found that his oath of office would have to be taken before federal officials, and that instructions on territorial policy were needed from the executive branch. The President, he learned from the newspapers, was at Mount Vernon, so he turned northward. First, however, by his friend and aide Major George Farragut, he sent on to Secretary Smith in the Territory the latter's commission, and likewise to Judge McNairy a long-sought copy of the Ordinance of 1787. Farragut's mission had other features as well. Through him Blount sought to allay western impatience by assuring Smith that the new government could await his coming as no proclamation had issued from the Carolina governor officially announcing the cession and its acceptance. Also, Farragut carried a large sum of money to buy military certificates collected by Robertson before inauguration of the new government should raise their price.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*; Wm. Blount to Jno. Steele, July 10, 1790, Wagstaff (ed.), *Steele Papers*, I, 67-70; David Harris to J. G. Blount, November 12, 1790; memoranda and miscellaneous letters; William Blount to Wilson Blount, July 30, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 845, 881, 833, 844; North Carolina Revolutionary Army Accounts, IX, 512-1 (North Carolina Historical Commission); Wm. to J. G. Blount, September 5, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 844.

<sup>23</sup>Jacob to J. G. Blount, September 17, 1790; Wm. Blount to James Hogg, August 31, 1790; Wm. to Thos. Blount, September 3, 1790; Thos. to J. G. Blount, September 19, 1790, *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>George F. Bentley, "Printers and Printing in the Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio, 1790-1796," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, VIII (1949), 333-34.

<sup>25</sup>Wm. Blount to D. Smith, September 6, 1790, Misc. MSS, B129½ (Tennessee State Archives); Wm. to J. G. Blount, November 10, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 845. George Farragut, whom Blount knew from Revolutionary War days, and who as his aide accompanied him to the Territory, was the father of Admiral David G. Farragut. For an account of George Farragut's career in the west, see Samuel C. Williams, "George Farragut," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications* (Knoxville), I (1929), 81-85.



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Indian affairs was his (as governor and superintendent); he licensed the  
politically potent lawyers, and he was answerable only to the President,  
whose instructions as to policy left the Governor wide latitude. Never in his  
palmiest days in the assembly had he wielded such power.<sup>28</sup>

The long journey, made five days longer by his slave's illness, was at last  
ended on October 10, when the new Governor arrived at William Yancey's  
house on the upper Holston. Then, after a brief pause to rest and forward  
word of his arrival, he moved south to the home of William Cobb, in the  
forks of the Holston and Watauga rivers, which was to constitute his tem-  
porary capital, and here his administration began. Cobb was a well-to-do  
North Carolina immigrant of the late 1760's, of considerable influence and  
great hospitality. A leader since King's Mountain days, he had formerly  
been a close associate of Richard Caswell's, and, until the Franklin episode,  
a friend of Sevier's. His white oak log home contained nine rooms, and the  
Governor, made comfortable in a chamber with glass windows and fireplace,  
conducted state business in the atmosphere of dignified affluence which he  
always sought to maintain.<sup>29</sup>

He learned much as he moved through the formalities of establishing  
his government, as he met the citizenry, studied the country, and heard from  
first hand of conditions formerly only reported by hearsay. Ever quick in  
appraising situations, he discovered in his new realm that variance of theory  
and fact, that contrast of the potential and the actual which pervaded the  
Territory. In theory his government ruled from the mountain crests to the  
Mississippi and from the 35th to the 36 1/2 degrees of latitude, comprising  
nearly 43,000 square miles of territory. As superintendent his authority pre-  
sumably extended southward to the 31st parallel, but in practice the Crown  
of Spain had excellent claims up to the 32°28', and others less solid but far  
more ambitious, extending to the Tennessee River. Meanwhile one of His  
Catholic Majesty's servants was making extensive plans to enforce all of  
these claims. The Spaniard's alarm was, however, in 1790 largely anticipa-  
tory, for the new Governor's writ ran chiefly in a narrow strip of country  
from the Virginia line some one hundred and fifty miles southwest to the  
Little Tennessee. This settled area, extending in breadth from twenty-five  
to sixty miles, was bounded on the south by high and Indian-claimed moun-  
tains, on the west by the savages' hunting grounds, on the north and northwest  
by the Clinch and Cumberland mountains. In the narrow valleys of the Hol-  
ston, Nolichucky, French Broad, and Little rivers dwelt the majority of the  
Territory's population, about 28,000 people. Over one hundred wilderness

<sup>28</sup>Wm. to J. G. Blount, September 20, 22, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 844.

<sup>29</sup>Wm. Blount to D. Smith, October 11, 1790, Draper MSS., 4XX19; Wm. Blount  
to J. Robertson, October 11, 1790, "Correspondence of General James Robertson,"  
*American Historical Magazine* (Nashville, 1896-1904), I (1896), 189; Rev. P. L.  
Cobb, "William Cobb - Host of Governor Blount," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*  
(Nashville, 1915-1937), IX (1926), 241-63, *passim*.

J. G. B., P. C. 844.

*ibid.*; Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 24 n.

miles to the west lay the other settlements, a population of between six and seven thousand more, strung out along the Cumberland for a distance of about thirty miles.<sup>30</sup> Between these settlements, and indeed throughout the remainder of the Territory, stretched wilderness pervaded by and legally guaranteed to a savage enemy.

Moreover, even this restricted settlement overran its authorized boundary. The legally just but practically injudicious treaty line of Hopewell slashed deeply through the areas of habitation. By its terms, towns, farms, forts, whole counties lay in Indian territory, and even the cession extorted from the Indians by the Franklinites could not contain the ever-widening rivulets of settlement. To the westward, fairly compact habitation extended to the Clinch, and more than a few intrepid home-seekers had pushed beyond this stream to make their clearings between it and Cumberland Mountain. To the south, the rich lands below the French Broad had drawn land-seekers since the 1783 act had opened western North Carolina, although that legislation had specifically denied that area to white settlement. By 1790 these settlers had pushed all the way to the Little Tennessee, the now-repudiated Franklin-Cherokee line of 1786, and their cabins rose but five short miles from the Cherokees' "Beloved Town" of Chota. To the Cumberland settlements the Hopewell agreements had been more generous, but here too the lengthening string of cabins along the Duck and its tributary creeks invited savage wrath.<sup>31</sup> For Blount, the heavily invested speculator, such expansion of settlement was the life of all his hopes. For Blount the governor, it was a challenge to his powers and a never-ending source of Indian warfare. That distant national authority which had drawn and guaranteed the restrictive if oft-ignored line now sent the speculator-governor to enforce it.

The same antithesis of fact and theory occurred in the Territory's economy. The fertile valleys, gentle hills, and enriching streams bespoke a thriving agrarian economy. But in the east the towering mountains from which the streams flowed defied most efforts at transport to eastern buyers, while the westward-flowing Tennessee slipped between miles of Indian-infested banks before it could lead to any market. Boxed in their valleys, the eastern farmers of the Territory looked to the Shenandoah Valley as the export route for their wheat, corn, hemp, pork, beef, or tobacco. Even so, the route was long, tedious, and costly. The same heavy expense of transport added

<sup>30</sup>Ramsey, *Annals*, 544, 545, 547-48; Samuel C. Williams, *History of the Lost State of Franklin* (Johnson City, 1924), 268-69; Samuel C. Williams (ed.), *Early Travels in the Tennessee Country* (Johnson City, 1928), 412; Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 81.

<sup>31</sup>John Haywood, *The Civil and Political History of Tennessee* (reprinted, Nashville, 1891), 263-65; Ramsey, *Annals*, 549. In the east the Hopewell line ran a few miles east of Greeneville, and in the west followed in general the watershed south of the Cumberland River.

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perhaps a third to the cost of their imports of manufactured goods from  
Baltimore or Philadelphia. Likewise, in isolated Mero the inviting Cumber-  
land River led but to a Spanish Mississippi and a precarious market at  
Natchez or New Orleans. The dry goods, ironmongery, glassware, saddlery,  
and spices that stocked the shelves of Lardner Clark or other merchants of  
the Nashville settlement had traversed an even longer route. From Baltimore  
or Philadelphia they had been packed overland to Pittsburgh, thence down  
the barge-laden Ohio to the Cumberland, up which they were laboriously  
moved by oar or pole to the little settlement on the bluffs. Thus, blocked  
in the east by mountains which roadbuilders had not yet conquered, and in  
the west by distance and the jealous Spaniard, the territorial farmer lacked  
an easy means of export, a reasonable source of supplies, or a currency with  
which to traffic. His demands for all three were not the least of his complaints  
to the new Governor.<sup>22</sup>

Likewise, divergence marked the Territory's political scene. According  
to their leaders' votes at Fayetteville, these westerners had sought cession  
to the United States; a national governor, then, should find abundant wel-  
come. But to many whose voices were not heard at Fayetteville the United  
States meant a Hopewell; it meant surrender to the Indians; it meant sub-  
serviency to the Spanish on the Mississippi. It meant taxation without de-  
fence or self-determination, a proconsul's rule in the interest of the Indian.  
Furthermore, inflamed by constant savage threat, the wounds of Franklin,  
covered but fresh, yet racked the Territory. In Washington District resent-  
ment kindled against Mero; in the latter area, jealousy burned against the  
older, larger, dominant settlements to the east. On the Cumberland Robert-  
son led unchallenged, at least on the surface, but on the Holston and French  
Broad the Sevier and John Tipton forces vied for control, and neither sought  
the leadership of Blount. For the Tiptonians, beaten in the fight for cession,  
well knew of the old Sevier-Blount entente, while Sevierites, whose hopes  
had risen after 1789, chafed under any leadership other than their Nolla-  
chucky Jack's.<sup>23</sup>

Resentful, Indian-harrassed, factional, suspicious — the territorial  
citizenry heard of their new Governor's arrival, and they awaited with cold  
and pragmatic judgement his first decisions.

The object of this scrutiny found his first weeks both busy and un-  
expectedly harmonious. He had apprehended, and even more than once  
been warned of, the probable hostility of a jealous Sevier and his followers.  
But the ex-Governor of Franklin proved a good politician. Though he had

<sup>22</sup>A. P. Whitaker, *The Mississippi Question, 1795-1803* (New York, 1934), 9-14.

<sup>23</sup>Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West*, 3 vols. (New York, 1889-1894);  
III, Part 1, 93; Whitaker, *Spanish-American Frontier*, 124-26; Williams, *Franklin*,  
346-48. "Nollachucky" is an older spelling of Nollachucky, contemporary with its  
use in Sevier's nickname.

probably felt some resentment at Blount's neutral Franklin attitude, and had keenly desired the territorial governorship, yet he realized the necessities of the situation. On his part, Blount soon recognized the vast personal popularity of the Indian fighter, and also the fact that the majority of western leaders were ex-Franklinites. A political alliance thus developed to supplement the older economic connection, and Sevier, according to Blount, became "open and clear in his declarations in my favor."<sup>84</sup>

As the Governor proceeded to organize his administration the effects of the alliance became evident. Though old officeholders under North Carolina, especially those of long service, were generally retained regardless of faction, the majority of appointees were Sevierites. For the strategic colonelcies, commanding in the militia, Blount named three Franklinites, Landon Carter, Gilbert Christian, and Stockley Donelson. He had suspected the influential Carter of enmity, but finding him reported as "much my friend and perfectly pleased with my appointment," Blount chose him for the Washington colonelcy over Tipton. This blow the fiery Tipton appeared to accept, but he declined appointment as senior justice of the peace, and bided his time. Meanwhile, the Governor and Judge Campbell travelled through the four counties (Washington, Sullivan, Greene, and Hawkins) which constituted the Washington District. Stopping at each county seat, Blount reconstituted the county under the new authority, read North Carolina's cession act and proclamation, his commission, and Congress' organic laws for the Territory. He then named officers, who took their oaths before Campbell. Amid addresses of welcome and polished replies the Governor was delighted with "the Honors, Respect, and Attention" shown him, accounts of which were duly relayed to Carolina.<sup>85</sup> True, there were disappointed office-seekers and some dissatisfaction, and a petition appeared protesting his appointments. But the Governor disdained the "whispers of Dissatisfaction from . . . some contemptible Tiptonites and only the most contemptible Part of his Party remain attached to him, the more sensible having entirely abandoned the Party." The politically orthodox, on the other hand, continued to be rewarded. Sevier, Carter, Charles Robertson, John Chisholm, William Cobb, Joseph Hardin, Robert Hays, Thomas Amis, James White, Francis Ramsey, and George Farragut were among the many appointed whose fame had long rested upon, or would soon overspread, the land.<sup>86</sup> One young protege, Archibald Roane, was named county attorney in Greene County, and his fellow, Andrew Jackson, was soon to receive even more in Mero District.

Blount dreaded a winter trip to this western district, but nevertheless planned an expedition thither, to consist of a numerous guard, several

<sup>84</sup>Wm. to J. G. Blount, October 20, November 7, 10, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 845.

<sup>85</sup>*State Gazette of North Carolina* (Edenton), December 17, 1790; Draper MSS., 11DD89a, 4XX20.

<sup>86</sup>Wm. to J. G. Blount, November 10, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 845; Ramsey, *Annals*, 553; Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 432-38.

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<sup>87</sup>Hu. William Mountflorence to *American Historica* 1790, J. G. B., P. C.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*

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, 10, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 845. December 17, 1790; Draper MSS., J. G. B., P. C. 845; Ramsey, *Annals*,

friendly Indians, and a number of prominent citizens. Meanwhile, however, there were interesting decisions to be made. The location of the capital, a prerogative of the governor, was arousing the liveliest interest, not only among large speculators in both east and west, but also among the humbler woodsmen, whom some of their descendants were to regard as unsophisticated in such complexities. Speculator James Mountflorencia and others through Daniel Smith, secretary of the territory, brought heavy pressure for the selection of a site in Mero District. On the other hand, the Indians whose land claims chiefly clashed with white settlement were the Cherokees, and their principal towns lay closer to Washington District. In addition to this, the Governor's own land on Emory River held a strong attraction for him. His decision was delayed, however, pending the arrival of his instructions from Philadelphia along with an Administration decision on the location of Federal troops in the Territory. Meanwhile, the advantages to be expected from landholding at the capital and Indian trading center caused a wild inflation of land prices at likely sites.<sup>87</sup>

Sevier, Robertson and their chief at this time began to plan for the financial rewards of cooperation. Landon Carter, Edmond Williams, and Sevier had been named in 1783 to a board to issue Revolutionary military certificates. These were not issued, and Sevier and the Governor now planned to issue them as of the date they were originally supposed to have been issued, and thus accrue seven years' interest. In addition, the certificates would be so worded as to assure assumption by the United States at their face value under the provisions of the Assumption Act of 1790. Sevier's son was to hold them until John Gray Blount sent paper from North Carolina to buy them at the depreciated price of four shillings on the dollar. This would satisfy the uninformed claimants and afford a handsome profit to the speculators. With North Carolina's querulous assembly over, John Gray could easily borrow the cash from his friends the collectors of taxes or from the treasurer.<sup>88</sup>

The General (Sevier) presented other alluring prospects to the Governor. Landon Carter, as entry-taker for Washington County under a 1779 act, had in his office unlocated entries by Sevier for some 30,000 acres of land, entered at fifty shillings per one hundred acres. If grants could be obtained for these from North Carolina, they could be located on the rich lands south of the French Broad and sold for ten pounds per one hundred acres, a handsome profit. The only difficulty was that of obtaining the Carolina governor's assent, inasmuch as the entries were legally limited to Washington

<sup>87</sup>Hu. Williamson to J. G. Blount, August 3, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 844; J. C. Mountflorencia to D. Smith, August 16, 1790, "Papers of Gen. Daniel Smith," *American Historical Magazine*, VI (1901), 218; Wm. to J. G. Blount, November 10, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 845.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*



County.<sup>39</sup> On the other hand, there were advantages to this scheme, as there was no money to advance, and Blount's name was not to appear.

At the same time, official duties were becoming pressing. Blount realized the necessity of formally commencing Indian relations, but could do nothing before the arrival of his instructions, and these, sent via Virginia, had miscarried. Meanwhile, the establishment of the Mero counties was imperative. Sevier had returned to Congress, and Judge Campbell had crossed the mountains for judicial conferences in the east, but despite these absences and bitter snowy weather the Governor on November 27 took up his journey to Cumberland. His retinue was impressive, with twenty-five mounted riflemen and as many prominent citizens.<sup>40</sup>

The entourage was hampered by weather and the precautions necessary in crossing the Indian country, but mid-December found the Governor in Nashville. Here with the same ceremony as in the eastern district he reconstituted Mero District and its counties (Davidson, Sumner, and Tennessee), named civil and military officers, and swore Daniel Smith and John McNairy into office, after which the latter gave the necessary oaths to the other appointees. As in the eastern counties, these officers represented the past and future leaders of their region. Without the complication of a Tipton faction, the Governor was able to follow unhampered his own and Robertson's selections. John Donelson, Sampson Williams, the two Robertsons, the Winchesters, William Cage, and Robert Hays were only a few of the many associates rewarded. Andrew Jackson, David Allison, Howell Tatum, J. C. Mountfloreance, and James White received the coveted attorneys' licenses.<sup>41</sup>

The Governor's visit was short. He did not travel in Sumner nor Tennessee County, but performed all the ceremonies at Nashville. Yet his eight-day stay allowed time for contacts and observation. He visited James Robertson's nearby estate of four thousand rich acres in the Cumberland Bend, and observed the General's grist and saw mills and blooded stock. In Nashville itself he inspected Lardner Clark's store, and with him discussed merchandizing problems; also his attention was drawn to Robertson's town lots and the other rich, black Cumberland lands with their limestone outcroppings.

<sup>39</sup>Wm. to J. G. Blount, November 10, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 845. These warrants possibly were a part of those which later involved Sevier in the notorious frauds of 1795 and exposures of 1802. For the charges against him and a case for him see T. P. Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee* (Chapel Hill, 1932), 173-78, and Carl S. Driver, *John Sevier* (Chapel Hill, 1932), 146-67.

<sup>40</sup>Wm. to J. G. Blount, November 27, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 845; H. Knox to Randolph, September 6, 1790, W. P. Palmer (ed.), *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, 11 vols. (Richmond, 1875-1885), V, 206; H. Knox to Lee, December 20, 1790, *ibid.*, 232; Wm. Blount to Iredell, November 17, 1790, Charles E. Johnson Collection, 1790-1791, P. C. 231 (North Carolina Historical Commission).

<sup>41</sup>The full list of Blount appointments is in the Governor's Journal, Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 438-42.

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The inhabitants of this fertile and undeveloped country likewise received a close inspection as Blount and the citizens regarded each other with great interest and considerable curiosity. The inhabitants beheld a courteous and dignified figure. The well-cut coat, the lace, the buckled shoes, the polished phrase and manner bespoke a foreigner; but the polite attention, optimism, and affability denoted a real interest in them and their country. The more discerning noted a reserve, a limit to conversational topics, assurances given but not promises, acquiescence made but not commitment. The frank bonhomie of a Sevier was notably absent.

The Governor on his part saw a society in transition. The inhabitants, who but lately had borne an unfavorable reputation for drunkenness, brawling, and the cropping of official ears, were now evolving a society much like that of the envied eastern district. Fights and brawls occurred less often, buckskin clothes were disappearing in favor of eastern dress and clubbed hair once seen only at the inns. Religion and education were beginning to soften social mores. Although the good Bishop Francis Asbury bewailed "the poor preachers indifferently clad, with emaciated bodies, and subject to hard fare," yet the pastors were not neglected by their growing flocks. The Presbyterians' stern, learned, and precise Thomas Craighead, a graduate of Princeton, was well established by now in Spring Hill meeting house. The Methodists, after years of services in the county jail, had recently built their new church, and a scattering of Baptists, Quakers, and Moravians gave further depth to the ranks of religion.<sup>42</sup>

As yet, of course, the classroom but indifferently complemented the pulpit. Pastor Craighead conducted classes in addition to his ministerial duties, and a few other individuals somewhat more learned than the average kept more or less desultory classes, but the average child's education was the familiar fireside learning. Of higher educational aims, intent still substituted for achievement despite North Carolina's establishment of Davidson Academy, presided over by Craighead; and those who dreamed of advanced learning envisaged the Reverend Samuel Doak's Martin Academy in Washington County, or, in wilder flights of fancy, sojourns in Philadelphia or Princeton.

Concurrently with social change ran economic diversity. The increasing number of saw and grist mills and iron works presaged a diversion from the all-pervading agriculture and hunting. The mounting population, the increasing number of stores and growing variety of merchandise in them, the plans and speculations concerning a livelihood gained through special services or artisanry, all these foretold a more varied and more complex

<sup>42</sup>For a reference to "earless magistrates," see Williams (ed.), *Early Travels*, 185. For general descriptions of economic and social conditions in Tennessee during this period, upon which this and succeeding paragraphs are based, see Whitaker, *Mississippi Question*, 10-22, *passim*; Abernethy, *Frontier to Plantation*, 144-63.

economic future. In short, the observant Governor saw a frontier society on the eve of transformation.

Yet withal, it was in 1790 a rude society. "The most isolated community since Jamestown," despite its signs of development, still remained a far outpost of civilization. Each week brought accounts of violence and death, ravishment and pillage on the Kentucky Road or on the thin line of communication with the lower Holston country. Fire and the tomahawk were constant visitors to the scattered homesteads along the Cumberland and its tributaries. The "station" or half-fortified cabin was the rule, and Nashville itself boasted of but two formal "houses." The grim days of '81 and '82 were over, but the peril was still omnipresent, and no man knew how soon would come the blow. Many were discouraged and took the road for the east; more were hopeful for better days. A few, the leaders, planned for those days, and with these few the speculator-governor, the owner of tens of thousands of acres of Cumberland and western Tennessee lands, was often in conference. In eight short days he sampled thoroughly the western mind.

Circumstances, however, now called the Governor to the east. The long-awaited Indian instructions must have arrived, and the Indian problem was, as it remained, the keystone of all policy. With his party, therefore, Blount left Mero District and took the cold and dangerous road to the east, arriving at Cobb's on December 29, 1790.

Several disappointments met him on his return. The complete absence of letters from home was disheartening. A protégé sent to North Carolina to obtain the strategic surveyor's position had fallen ill and failed in his mission. A quarrel was brewing with Virginia over the Territory's northern border. Complaints were rising over the persistent practice of the North Carolina land office of issuing grants for land south of the French Broad.<sup>44</sup> William Peery of Maryland, who had been named the third of the territorial judges, had not appeared, nor was his whereabouts known. Orders from Philadelphia instructed the Governor to hold a treaty with the Cherokees, but only within the framework of the Hopewell agreements, and for the principal purpose of checking the Tennessee Yazoo Company's project for settlement at Muscle Shoals.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Wm. Blount to Gov. Martin, January 22, 1791, Governors' Papers, State Series, XVIII, Alex. Martin, I (North Carolina Historical Commission). The Blount-Sevier plan to secure North Carolina grants in the French Broad area was still pending, but the Governor's position forced him to object officially to a practice which he planned to use personally. Blount-Martin-Jefferson correspondence, April-October, 1792, Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 142-43, 155-56, 164-66, 191-93; North Carolina *Journal* (Halifax), November 24, 1792. For the boundary quarrel, see Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 199-208, 241; Arthur Campbell to Wm. Blount, June, n. d., 1792, Draper MSS., 9DD69a; *Calendar of Virginia State Papers*, IV, 365-66, V, 242-43, 391, 451, 463-64, 479-80, 578, 580, 588-89, 605, 609; Haywood, *Tennessee*, 487, 497, 498, 499; W. R. Garrett, "Northern Boundary of Tennessee," *American Historical Magazine*, VI, 18-40.

<sup>45</sup>John McNairy to Thomas Jefferson, March 7, 1791; H. Knox to the President, March 10, 1791, Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 49, 50-51. No copy of Blount's instructions

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Some Indian agreement was, however, indispensable. Although trouble was brewing in their quarter, the Creeks were as yet quiescent under McGillivray's New York Treaty of 1790; likewise the usually friendly Chickasaws and Choctaws were no immediate problem. The Cherokees, however, posed an imminent threat. This tribe of some two or three thousand warriors had been divided since the Revolution, and the seceding band, the Chickamaugas, proved the most vigorous and incessant enemies of the advancing whites. Attacks from their five towns, located about one hundred miles below the mouth of the Holston River, had been fierce and incessant since 1782. By 1791 the enmity of both of these Cherokee factions was increased. The flood of immigration following the 1783 land act carried white cabins deep into Indian hunting lands. The Franklin treaties excited the savages further, especially when coupled with the appearance of speculators on the Bend of the Tennessee River. Reassured somewhat by the congressional commissioners at Hopewell, the Cherokees were dismayed the more by the almost complete negation of that treaty by the rising white tide. In addition, the Georgia grants to the three Yazoo companies in 1789 and the activities of James O'Fallon, the South Carolina Company's agent, throughout 1790 had deeply disturbed the federal government, the Spanish, and the savages. Therefore, the Indian defeat of Gen. Josiah Harmar's expedition in the northwest in October seemed to present to the resentful Cherokees an inducement to chastise and restrain the invader in the southwest as well. Already, sporadic Indian harassment was increasing, and informed people both within and outside the Territory anticipated a general attack.<sup>46</sup>

Blount, therefore, hastened to prepare for a treaty. He sent Major Robert King, United States agent to the Cherokees, to that nation requesting a meeting on May 31, 1791, at the mouth of the French Broad. To Secretary Henry Knox he wrote a detailed argument in favor of scrapping the Hopewell agreements altogether and obtaining further Indian cessions, to be paid for with the annuity of one thousand dollars which Knox had proposed merely as a gift to insure Indian favor. The lands he suggested for purchase were in the Muscle Shoals area, the object of both Zachariah Cox's Tennessee Yazoo company and his own earlier project.<sup>46</sup> His careful estimates of the expenses of the proposed treaty meeting and the method of payment were at once accepted by the Administration. Meanwhile, Major King returned with a report that both the Upper Towns led by Hanging Maw and the Lower

is known to exist, the official copy having presumably been destroyed in the War Department fire of November, 1800.

<sup>45</sup>Mary Mitchell to Gov. Shelby, May 1, 1793, Draper MSS., 11DD19c; Ramsey, *Annals*, 552, 557, 561; Haywood, *Tennessee*, 269-70; Weeks, "Joseph Martin," *loc. cit.*, 432-36, 442-65.

<sup>46</sup>H. Knox to the President, March 10, 1791, Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 50-52; C. H. Haskins, "The Yazoo Land Companies," *American Historical Association Papers*,

Towns under Little Turkey were disposed to negotiate. As the weeks passed, however, problems increased. Andrew Pickens of South Carolina, angry with Blount over their clashes at Hopewell, warned the Cherokees against him as the worst governor possible—"that he loved land and would have all their lands."<sup>47</sup> At the same time, hostile Indian traders worked against the Governor's aims so that rumors swept among the tribes that he was luring them to be massacred, and Blount found it necessary to send Robertson into the nation with assurances of benevolence.<sup>48</sup>

But while working for a treaty, Blount by no means abandoned his many business interests either in his old home or his new. He followed the certificate market through John Gray and through Ashe and Steele in Congress. In land operations, Robertson was sent forth on a surveying party, and the Governor, deeply impressed with the richness of Cumberland soil, continued to purchase military warrants and otherwise to acquire acreage.<sup>49</sup> He also returned to an earlier enthusiasm by buying an interest in the well-established and profitable iron-works of Colonel James King and John Sevier.<sup>50</sup> He continued to give thought to the location of his capital, and about this time decided in favor of White's Fort (site of Knoxville) in the vicinity of the junction of the Holston and the French Broad, provided the treaty site on examination proved satisfactory. The advantages of this site were several, both in public utility and in the Governor's ownership of lands in the neighborhood.<sup>51</sup>

V, Part Four (1891), 80; Whitaker, *Spanish-American Frontier*, 126-29. Sevier was associated with both the Tennessee and the South Carolina Yazoo companies, and Cox had accompanied Blount's speculator associates to the Bend in 1784. On the other hand, there is no evidence that Blount was at this time associated with either Yazoo company. The indications are that he still had his own Bend company plans in mind, and actually opposed Cox's 1789-1791 project. By 1795, however, when the second Yazoo grants were made, Blount's company was moribund, and he was ready to cooperate with Cox. *Ibid.*, 144-45; Haskins, "Yazoo Land Companies," *loc. cit.*, 83; W. Lowrie (ed.), *American State Papers, Public Lands*, 8 vols. (Washington, 1832-1861), I, 225; Masterson, *Business Man in Politics*, 260, 306, 307. The date in Lowrie's work is an obvious misprint.

<sup>47</sup>"General Lincoln's Journal," *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, Third Series, 10 vols. (Boston and Cambridge, 1825-49), V (1836), 172; Pickering Papers, LIX, 15 (Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston).

<sup>48</sup>Ramsey, *Annals*, 544, 554; Haywood, *Tennessee*, 269; A. W. Putnam, *History of Middle Tennessee* (Nashville, 1859), 343, 352.

<sup>49</sup>Draper MSS., 32S374; Tennessee County and Sumner County Deeds (State Land Office, Raleigh); Knox County Deed Book (Knoxville, Tennessee), Book A, I, *passim*. Blount's land operations become more devious and difficult to trace after 1790 since he avoided criticisms of his growing acquisitions by the use of fictitious names, and by working through second and third parties. For these and other reasons it is very unlikely that the full story of his land operations will ever be known. Through scores of documents, however, both in the John Gray Blount Collection and in the State Land Office in Raleigh, the main outline is clear—never-ending acquisition.

<sup>50</sup>Taylor, *Historic Sullivan*, 122, 153; Williams (ed.), *Early Travels*, 332; *American Historical Magazine*, V (1900), 204; Whitaker, *Mississippi Question*, 18.

<sup>51</sup>The precise date of this decision is variously estimated. It is clear that Blount had not decided before the Cumberland trip, on which he probably viewed the area.

Too, there were official duties besides preparations for the treaty. Elijah Robertson, pursuing a fugitive debtor into West Florida, was furnished with a letter of introduction to Governor Gayoso. In February Blount named Andrew Jackson attorney general of Mero District and William Cocke to the same office in Washington District. He also recommended Robertson and Sevier to the brigadier generalships of the two districts, which posts they received from the President. A long list of minor appointments consumed time but contributed political strength.<sup>52</sup>

More difficult tasks than patronage also pressed. Congress had not provided for the census-taking in the Territory, and a system had to be worked out through the sheriffs. Also, Secretary Jefferson in compliance with a resolution of Congress was engaged in determining the amount of unallocated land within the Territory. Blount and Governor Alexander Martin of North Carolina were both enlisted in this task and the former ordered returns made from the old land offices of Washington and Sullivan counties as well as from the two Armstrong offices.<sup>53</sup>

At the same time, the perseverance of Zachariah Cox and his associates continued to cause at least official concern. Despite three warning proclamations by Washington, the promoter and thirty-one others on March 26 left the mouth of the French Broad to make their attempt at settlement at the Shoals. Blount knew of but three of his citizens' being in the party, but two of these were ex-Franklinites, of whom one, James Hubbard, had a most violent and unsavory record in dealing with Indians. The Governor was, therefore, deeply concerned over the effects of the expedition on the forthcoming treaty negotiations, and willingly followed instructions to discourage the prospective settlements, and to bring legal action if necessary. Sentiment in the Territory, however, was strongly in favor of Cox's project, and Blount, purposely or otherwise, failed to use effective legal restraint on the settlers in time to prevent their departure.<sup>54</sup>

The evidence of his personal interest in the locality is circumstantial but convincing. Abernethy, *Frontier to Plantation*, 53; Deed of James White and William Blount, September 6, 1791 (Tennessee File, State Land Office, Raleigh). Love and Ramsey, two of the original surveyors of the site, were business associates of the Blounts, and to locate the capital on his own lands had always been the Governor's plan. Wm. to J. G. Blount, November 10, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 845.

<sup>52</sup>Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 442-44; Wm. Blount to Governor Gayoso, March 8, 1791, Archivo General de Indias, Papeles de Cuba, 204, No. 1 (translated typed copy, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville); Ramsey, *Annals*, 543-44.

<sup>53</sup>For the census-taking Jefferson suggested using the sheriffs, but Blount chose to have it done through the militia officers. It is possible that an informal poll on the question of calling an assembly was taken at the same time and resulted in a negative vote. Jefferson to Blount, March 12, 26, 1791, Thomas Jefferson Papers, I (Library of Congress); Wm. Blount to John Sevier, May 31, 1793, Draper MSS., 4XX35; Blount Circular, March 7, 1791; Wm. Blount to Jefferson, July 17, 27, 1791, Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 49-50, 69-70, 71. Jefferson's report on the lands in the Territory is in *American State Papers, Public Lands*, I, 17-20.

<sup>54</sup>Wm. Blount to D. Smith, April 17, 1791, Philip M. Hamer (ed.), "Letters of Governor William Blount," East Tennessee Historical Society's *Publications*, No. 4

Caution was the more necessary since another battle with popular feeling was simultaneously in progress. The Administration having decided to mount another expedition against the Indians in the northwest, Blount was instructed to raise men under Sevier to join General Arthur St. Clair at Fort Washington in June or July. The Governor was much interested in the success of this expedition since if all went well a fort was to be established at the Muscle Shoals, and after the expected victory in the north he was sure of a sizeable diversion of troops to his Territory.<sup>55</sup> Most southwesterners, however, felt that excessive attention was devoted to their favored brethren to the northward while they themselves were ignored in their Indian-infested misery. The savage threat at home brought constant anxiety, increased by the distasteful militia service and the memory of the disaster of Harmar, in which a number of Tennesseans had been involved. The Governor therefore found himself hard put to raise the men. His orders were, perforce, mingled with moral and economic appeals:

It is hoped that this Requisition of three hundred and thirty two men will not be thought oppressive when it is recollected that the people of this territory pay no public taxes, when it is recollected that they are exempt from the Operation of the Act imposing a Duty of nine Cents per Gallon on Whiskey and other distilled spirits, and I have not the least doubt but the President believed when he gave the Order that the men in so remote a back country would readily turn out voluntarily for the bounty, Pay & Clothing which are offered, and well he might so believe since the Price offered is much more than can be obtained in money for hard Labour for that space of time. These Troops are to go to the relief and aid of our neighbors of Kentucky and to love your neighbors as yourself is one of the first of the Christian virtues. What is promised on the part of the United States will be faithfully performed. There will be no putting soldiers off with paper money or certificates for the United States are in Cash and want not Credit.<sup>56</sup>

However, the response to these arguments, even when they had been reinforced by a draft of men, continued to be reluctant, and the Governor willingly turned over to Sevier the unpopular tasks of enlistment and equipment. His excuse for this, that preparations for the treaty absorbed his

(1932), 123-25; Blount to Robertson, September 3, 1791, "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, 192-93; Walter Lowrie and M. S. C. Clark (eds.), *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, 2 vols (Washington, 1832-1834), I, 112-13, 114-17; Haskins, "Yazoo Land Companies," *loc. cit.*, 80. For Hubbard's atrocities, see A. V. Goodpasture, "Indian Wars and Warriors of the Old Southwest, 1730-1807," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, IV (1918), 137-45. Arthur Campbell cooperated closely with Blount in attempting to block the expedition. John Strother to A. Campbell, February 18, 1791, Draper MSS., 9DD65.

<sup>55</sup>Randolph C. Downes, "Indian Affairs in the Southwest Territory, 1790-1796," *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, Series Two, III (1937), 240, 243; Wm. Blount to Robertson, September 21, 1791, Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 82.

<sup>56</sup>Wm. Blount to Col. Kennedy, May 21, 1791, Blount Manuscripts (Lawson McGhee Library).

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own time, was by no means unjustified. Small parties of savages appeared at Cobb's to confer, and policy dictated that they be given attention and presents. The Chickamaugas were relatively quiet at the moment, although carrying on attacks against the pro-white Chickasaws; however, the Cherokees were alarmed and uneasy over the proposed treaty and still delayed coming. The Creeks, now torn by the rival leadership of William Augustus Bowles and McGillivray and instigated by the Spanish, repudiated the New York Treaty and recommenced attacks, especially on the exposed Cumberland settlers.<sup>57</sup>

As the treaty time approached, therefore, Blount devoted more and more time to preparations for obtaining the best possible terms. Joseph Martin, despite the suspicions of the settlers, joined Robertson in "endeavors to put the Indians in the proper way of thinking" preliminary to the negotiations. From the east Hawkins warned the Governor that the principal aggressors since Hopewell had been the whites, and urged that he not seek too great a cession. Williamson, likewise, felt that the Administration would be satisfied with a moderate acquisition. McGillivray, in accordance with his promise at New York, advised the Cherokees to treat, provided the whites would promise to cease their speculative purchases. On the other hand, speculators and western officials argued that if possible the three hundred squatter families south of French Broad should have their holdings legalized, and that sufficient further land should be obtained, if at all possible, to include the routes between Cumberland and East Tennessee. Knox, in response to Blount's suggestions along this line, appears to have written new instructions allowing more latitude to the negotiator.<sup>58</sup>

At length, charged with various advice and instructions, and balanced between ambition and anxiety, the Governor in June, 1791, departed for the treaty ground at White's Fort. Here again delay paralyzed affairs as John Watts and the Bloody Fellow, perhaps the most influential Cherokee chiefs, still held back, and Martin's utmost exertions were necessary to urge them on. Meanwhile, Colonels Isaac Shelby and Thomas Kennedy arrived from Kentucky with such harrowing tales of Cherokee atrocities and such demands for action that a volunteer retaliatory force rose and only with

<sup>57</sup>H. Knox to A. St. Clair, August 11, 1791, *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 181; Wm. Blount to D. Smith, April 17, 1791, Hamer (ed.), "Letters of Governor William Blount," *loc. cit.*, 124-25; Goodpasture, "Indian Wars," *loc. cit.*, 178-80; Ramsey, *Annals*, 552, 553, 557. For Bowles and McGillivray, see two works of A. P. Whitaker, *Spanish-American Frontier*, 112, 135, 140, and "Alexander McGillivray, 1789-1793," *North Carolina Historical Review*, V (1928), 289-309.

<sup>58</sup>Wm. Blount to Jos. Martin, June 6, 1791, Hamer (ed.), "Letters of Governor William Blount," *loc. cit.*, 125; Ben. Hawkins to Blount, March 10, 1791, Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, III, Part 1, 255-56; Hu. Williamson to J. G. Blount, August 15, 22, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 844; McGillivray to Miró, August 28, 1791, Papeles de Cuba, 1440; H. Knox to the President, March 10, 1791, Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV,



great difficulty was restrained, not by the Governor, who lacked the influence, but by the all-important militia officers.<sup>50</sup>

But at last the many difficulties were overcome and some twelve hundred Indians had arrived at the treaty ground. Disappointed by the absence of the Chickamaugas, Blount nevertheless realized that enough Cherokees were present to formulate a binding treaty. His love of ceremony and ritual was in keeping with Indian tastes, and it was given free reign. On a bank of the Tennessee (then called the Holston) and shaded by giant trees a marquee was erected. Under it sat the Governor in full dress with sword and military hat, flanked by his uncovered civil and military officers. Behind these stood the knots of curious citizenry whose homes lay about the neighborhood of the fort. Before the marquee were grouped the Indian braves, resplendent in eagle feathers and other finery. In the front rank the older chiefs and the medicine men, in more somber dress, eyed the splendor of the Governor-Superintendent. James Armstrong, who claimed familiarity with the etiquette of European courts, acted as master of ceremonies. One by one in order of age the chiefs were introduced by an interpreter to Armstrong, who, in turn, presented them by their Indian names to the seated Governor.<sup>51</sup>

After this ceremonial opening the negotiations began, carried on in the style of the Indian council. Blount opened his attack at once with the announcement that the purpose of the meeting was to obtain a cession of land from the Indians. The latter, who professed to believe that the negotiations were to have dealt chiefly with procedural difficulties in the Hopewell treaties, appeared deeply chagrined, but the Governor pressed his point. He sought to begin the new boundary line in the Cumberland area, but the chiefs insisted on beginning it in the east where the major collisions were occurring. Blount therefore re-commenced with a proposal that the new line be from the Tennessee River to a ridge between the Little and the Little Tennessee (then called the Tennessee) rivers, thus to include the settlers south of the French Broad. The Indians rejected this, so the Governor proposed a yet larger cession, coupled with an offer to settle himself on the new line in order to enforce it. This suggestion being hastily rejected, Blount then turned to his first suggestion, to which the Indians replied with a counter-proposal that the line be run down the Holston from the Great Island. This would involve a smaller cession and in addition leave out land

50-51; Blount to Knox, July 2, 1791 (excerpt), *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 628.

<sup>51</sup>Blount to Martin, June 16, 1791, Hamer (ed.), "Letters of Governor William Blount," *loc. cit.*, 126; Robertson to D. Smith, June 6, 1791, Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 59.

<sup>52</sup>Ramsey, *Annals*, 555-56. At that time the name "Holston" was applied to what is now the Tennessee to the mouth of the Little Tennessee, and the Little Tennessee was called the Tennessee.

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along the route of the Mero-Washington road which the Governor was intent on securing, and he therefore refused it.<sup>61</sup>

Day after day thus passed with both sides becoming angrier and the debate more acrimonious. Indian complaints of white encroachments grew bitter. Watts denounced all North Carolinians as treaty-breakers with whom all negotiations were useless, and expressed surprise that the Governor, a Carolinian, should have been sent to treat; Blount's desire for a boundary on the winding ridge was declared to be evidence of his crooked heart. On his side, the Governor brutally told the chiefs that they could not appeal to the President for they had no money to make the trip. Also, in reply to the charge of white encroachment, he flatly ignored the policy of the United States by claiming all the disputed lands by right of conquest in the Revolution.

At length the Indians yielded to the main contention of the inexorable Governor, but they remained adamant that the line should be drawn straight from the point where the ridge between the Little and the Little Tennessee rivers hit the Tennessee eastward to the North Carolina line and westward to the mouth of the Clinch, instead of following the meanderings of the natural boundary as he desired. The Clinch River became the western boundary of the cession in East Tennessee. The argument then turned to compensation. The chiefs scornfully remarked that the one thousand dollars offered would not buy a breech cloth for each of their nation, and only with difficulty were they persuaded to settle temporarily on that annual sum, provided Congress on application should raise the figure.

After these main contentions were settled, other provisions were inserted in the treaty. One of these placed the Cherokees and their trade under the protection of the United States. Another provided for a mutual exchange of prisoners by the following April. The boundary, guaranteed by the United States, was to be marked by a joint commission of whites and Indians, and intruders on Indian lands would be left to the mercy of the savages. Passports were required to enter Indian territory, and horse thieves and other felonious fugitives were to be given up by the Indians to the whites. Likewise, crimes committed by whites in Indian territory were to be punished by the criminal's home government, and acts of retaliation were renounced. Other stipulations concerned agricultural tools and interpreters for the Indians and unhindered use of the Washington-Mero road and the Tennessee River by the whites.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup>The only accounts of the treaty proceedings are later Indian versions, *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 204-05, 628-29. The first of these was occasioned by subsequent controversy and presents one side only. The second is derived from official, and therefore not very revealing, correspondence. Blount utterly denied the truth of either; nevertheless, they furnished his enemies with unfailing sources of accusation. See note 63.

<sup>62</sup>The text of the treaty is in Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 60-67.

As the provisions were discussed and agreed to, the double transition from oral agreement in the Indian tongue to written English in the treaty gave opportunity for both honest misunderstanding and deliberate chicanery. The Indians later flatly denied knowledge of or consent to the clause on the free navigation of the Tennessee, and they further charged that as to the white area on the western end of the dividing line they had agreed to an area ten miles above Nashville, whereas the interpreter had been bribed and the treaty provided for forty miles. They also maintained that they had been promised two thousand dollars at once, but that "one thousand" dollars had been secretly inserted in the treaty.<sup>63</sup>

In any event, Blount did not forget his personal interests. Early in the meeting, according to the Indian account, he approached the chiefs to obtain a sale of the Muscle Shoals lands, since, he told the Indians, "he had already purchased these lands of the State of Georgia, but was desirous of making a fuller purchase of our nation." Yet, despite his promises to erect storehouses and gunsmiths' shops for the use of the Indians, the chiefs refused to sell the lands, saying that they were the common hunting grounds of four nations.<sup>64</sup>

Notwithstanding this defeat, however, the Governor had made a treaty successful both from a public and a private point of view. He had, at least on paper, regularized Indian-white relations on critical points, legalized the settlements south of the French Broad, obtained a considerable cession of territory (including some of his own lands), and had included in the treaty certain indefinite terminology, favorable construction of which might bring yet more land and squatters within white territory.<sup>65</sup> Hence, convinced that no more land could have been obtained, he expressed himself as well satisfied.

<sup>63</sup>"Diary of Jacob Lindley," *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, 21 vols. (Lansing, 1900-1913), XVII (1890), 611. These accounts must be accepted with considerable caution, since all parties concerned were strongly pro-Indian. It is also odd that the charges against Blount were not, apparently, made officially during the visit of the chiefs to the President in January, 1792. *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 203-06. On the other hand, despite the possibilities of simple misunderstandings, the evidence indicates the existence of trickery at the treaty meeting. "General Lincoln's Journal," *loc. cit.*, 171; Geo. Welbank to Col. Alexander McKee, January 16, 1793, Philip Hamer (ed.), "The British in Canada and the Southern Indians, 1790-1794," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 2 (1930), 117; Pickering Papers, LIX, No. 15.

<sup>64</sup>*American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 203-04. The Indians later recounted this passage with the Governor as part of the treaty proceedings, but it is inconceivable that the secretive Blount would thus air his projects before a public assembly. It undoubtedly occurred in private. For the Blount interest in Muscle Shoals, see Masterson, *Business Man in Politics*, 68-70, 75, 76-78 ff.

<sup>65</sup>Abernethy, *Frontier to Plantation*, 120; A. L. Bramlett, *North Carolina's Western Lands* (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of North Carolina, 1928), 80-81; J. C. Posey, *William Blount, the Land Speculator* (unpublished Master's thesis, Vanderbilt, 1929), 69, 71; Hu. Williamson to J. G. Blount, August 15, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 844; *American State Papers, Indian Affairs*, I, 629. Abernethy's charge that Blount sought to create further friction by leaving Indian land between Mero and Washington districts is untenable. All records indicate that to obtain these lands would have been impossible, and that he secured what he did only with the greatest difficulty.

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An express was sent off to Philadelphia with the treaty, and diplomatically worded reports were directed to frontier leaders in Kentucky and South Carolina.<sup>65</sup>

His sojourn on the lower Holston had confirmed the Governor's decision to locate his capital at White's Fort; he therefore arranged for the construction of a weatherboarded log cabin on a little hill near the Tennessee River to serve as a temporary home for his family until a more fitting mansion could be built. The selection of this site for the capital had been anticipated for some time now, and the heavily forested hills and plateaus about White's Fort were increasingly dotted with clearings. The two-storied fort itself was the only building of any size, but White now planned to lay off streets and lots, and owners of surrounding lands, including the Governor, anticipated sizeable profits. In honor of his superior officer, Secretary of War Knox, Blount named the place "Knoxville."<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, with his most immediate objective accomplished, Blount now planned his delayed trip to North Carolina. "Molsey" had at length agreed to come to the frontier, and in addition to bringing his family to the west, he had both old and new business demands. James Mountfloreance, lawyer and speculator of Nashville,<sup>68</sup> had proposed to use his connections in France to sell Blount lands abroad, and this and certificate transactions required conferences with John Gray Blount. In addition, Blount's foes in the December Carolina assembly had secured a resolution directing the attorney general to sue for the unpaid Hopewell accounts of the ex-agent, whose personal attention was now required for his defense. He therefore requested of Knox a leave of absence from September 15 to November 20.<sup>69</sup>

Blount did not, however, idly await permission for his trip east. He sent Mountfloreance to Philadelphia and Titus Ogden to Carolina to settle accounts and speculate further in certificates, Mountfloreance being charged also with

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 628-29; Wm. Blount to Harry Innes and others, July 2, 1791, Innes Papers, XIX (Library of Congress); Wm. Blount to Governor Charles Pinckney, July 8, 1791, Correspondence of William Blount, 1777-1797 (typed copies, Lawson McGhee Library, Knoxville).

<sup>66</sup>Note 51, above; Wm. Blount to John Steele, July 22, 1791, Wagstaff (ed.), *Steele Papers*, I, 80. For description of the site, see Ramsey, *Annals*, 374-76, 558-60.

<sup>67</sup>Mountfloreance, a native of France, had served in North Carolina during the Revolution, and Blount had known him in the ratifying convention of 1789. He had moved to the Tennessee country after the Revolution and practiced law and land speculation in Nashville. Carter (ed.), *Papers*, 71, 441; Walter Clark (ed.), *The State Records of North Carolina* (Raleigh, 1886-1907), XVI, 489, 527; XVII, 663, 744; Edythe R. Whitley (ed.), *Tennessee Genealogical Records* (Nashville, 1932—), I (1932), 13, 99, 120, 138, 155, 195; Alice B. Keith (ed.), "Letters from James Cole Mountfloreance to Members of the Blount Family," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XIV (1937), 253-54.

<sup>68</sup>J. C. Mountfloreance to Wm. Blount, November 17, 1791, J. G. B., P. C. 846; *State Records of North Carolina*, XXI, 799, 868, 962, 1058, 1059, 1071; Hunt to Geo. Ogg, December 17, 1790, J. G. B., P. C. 845; Blount to Secretary Knox, July 17, 1791; Blount to Jefferson, July 27, 1791; Jefferson to Blount, August 12, 17, 22, 1791, Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 70-71, 74-75, 77-78.

the reports on land occupation and geography that had been requested by the secretary of state. Also the Governor was again plagued by frontier enterprise. The expedition to the Muscle Shoals under Zachariah Cox had failed, due to the warnings of a party of Cherokees, but popular sympathy was so strongly in favor of the trespassers that a grand jury impanelled in Washington District, to Blount's chagrin, refused to indict them. The Spanish, however, had taken a more serious view of the effort and, by Miró's orders, had raised a fort at Walnut Hills (site of Memphis) to prevent the success of this or any other such enterprise. This Spanish stroke, observed by Secretary Daniel Smith on a surveying expedition, was reported by him to Blount, who, deeply alarmed, informed the secretary of war.<sup>70</sup> Finally, the routine and tedious tasks of passing on commissary accounts, filling militia offices, and collecting information on Indian troubles absorbed much time. In July Joseph Anderson of Delaware, named by Washington as the third territorial judge after Peery had declined the post, arrived and was sworn in. The Governor had not formerly known him, but found him "a genteel man . . . a learned Judge and a very agreeable open Companion," and sent him to Robertson with warm recommendations.<sup>71</sup>

The census-taking of the Territory was delayed both by the difficulties of communication and by the reluctance of the citizens to be counted, since they feared, so the Governor alleged, their number would result in the establishment of a legislature. Whether or not this was a true cause of reluctance, it was entirely in accord with the Governor's own distaste for a division of his authority. Therefore, although even incomplete figures totalled 35,691 persons as of late July, the Governor made no plans for this next step in territorial administration.<sup>72</sup>

His principal concern, however, in the late summer of 1791 was the mounting tempo of Indian attacks. The business man-governor naturally attached great importance to written agreement. He approached treaty-making and regarded treaties in much the same manner as he did the clever maneuvering for binding advantage with which he was familiar in the mercantile world. Several years of crushing disillusionment would yet be required to instruct him in the real weaknesses of the treaty process between

<sup>70</sup>Blount to Knox, July 28, 1791 (extract), Thomas Jefferson Papers, LXXXIX; Blount to Robertson, September 3, 1791, "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, 192-93; Ramsev, *Annals*, 550-51; Whitaker, *Spanish-American Frontier*, 148, 214.

<sup>71</sup>Blount to Robertson, September 3, 21, 1791, "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, 192-93; Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 40, 49, 80, 446.

<sup>72</sup>Blount to Jefferson, September 19, 1791, *ibid.*, 80-81; Blount to John Sevier, May 31, 1793, Draper MSS., 4XX35; A. V. Goodpasture, "William Blount and the Old Southwest Territory," *American Historical Magazine*, VIII (1903), 9. This latter writer pictures Blount as the democratic instrument of his citizens' wishes. This is not an accurate picture of the personality or nature of William Blount. It does appear, however, that in this instance neither Blount, for personal reasons, nor his citizens, for fear of taxation, desired a legislature at this time. Note 53, above; Abernethy, *Frontier to Plantation*, 133.

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equally dissatisfied whites and savages. It was with deep concern, there-  
fore, that in the face of his new treaty he heard of the increasing violence  
which beset his citizens. With the aid of the militia officers he had drawn up  
and forwarded by Mountflorencia a plan of defense for the Cumberland area,  
calling for the stationing of regular troops in the Territory. This was  
seconded by a respectful but plain-spoken memorial to the President from the  
civil and military officers of the Mero District. But while the national  
administration gave languid attention to the "degradations" of "a few  
rascally Indians," the settlers were growing increasingly restive under the  
mounting attacks of the Chicamaugas and the Creeks.<sup>73</sup> Knox, straining to  
equip St. Clair's expedition and anxious for the assistance or at least the  
neutrality of the southern Indians in the coming campaign, could authorize  
nothing more than calling out the two companies of militia who, already  
tired of too constant calls, showed marked reluctance to leave their homes  
unguarded. The Governor, therefore, could do little but remind the militia  
officers that they were sworn to support the Constitution and the government,  
and to urge that the treaty be observed.<sup>74</sup> Blount, in fact, now faced the  
problem which beset his entire administration—that of making palatable to  
the harried and resentful frontiersmen policies of the national government  
which, however intrinsically sound, appeared callous to the interests of his  
citizens.

For the present, however, escape from the problem was possible, since  
Secretary of State Jefferson informed him that his request for a leave of  
absence had been approved by the President. Hence with a sense of both  
accomplishment and relief, Blount turned eastward on September 15, 1791,  
to take the winding road for home, Molsey, and his family.

<sup>73</sup>Robertson to Blount (?), August 25, 1791; Blount to Robertson, September 3, 1791, "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, 191-93; Memorial of Mero Officers, August 1, 1791, Carter (ed.), *Papers*, IV, 72-73; J. Winchester to D. Smith, June 20, 1791, Draper MSS., 7ZZ32-33; Haywood, *Tennessee*, 269-70, 341.

<sup>74</sup>Knox to Blount, August 18, 1791 (extract), George Washington Papers, CCLI (Library of Congress); Blount to Robertson, September 3, 21, 1791, "Robertson Correspondence," *loc. cit.*, 192-93.