

“The Glasgow Land Fraud and the Emergence of Andrew Jackson, 1783-1803”

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A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia in Candidacy
for the Degree of Master of Arts

Department of History

University of Virginia, December, 2016

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The fragility of the new nation required strong and effective leadership that could successfully consolidate the support of western settlers. The best way to earn this support was by securing settlers' property and clarifying the confusion over land titles and jurisdictions that defined the Confederation era. What became known as the Glasgow land fraud that occurred from 1783-1800, embodies this complex and tumultuous process. The Glasgow dispute was over an alleged land fraud scheme that resulted from forged North Carolina bounty grants to Revolutionary War veterans. The grants were for land in middle Tennessee along the Cumberland River. The fraud escalated an existing feud between Andrew Jackson and John Sevier that reshaped political leadership in the Tennessee frontier. As a judge and emerging political figure in Nashville, Jackson accused the more prominent Sevier of being part of an elaborate scheme orchestrated by the North Carolina Secretary of State, James Glasgow, to issue fraudulent grants. The rivalry between these two men - one the “hero” of Watauga, King’s Mountain, and Franklin, the other a recently arrived Nashville judge and congressional delegate - helped determine the future of frontier political culture.

The feud was the formative experience of Jackson’s early political career. Although Jackson hoped to dethrone the popular Sevier, his accusations of land fraud did not seriously harm the man Tennesseans affectionately called, “Nolichucky Jack.” But through the resulting feud, Jackson got a sense of what settlers wanted from their leaders and began to reshape his public image in a way that would ultimately make him one of the most consequential figures in early American history. Jackson redefined what American’s expected from their political leaders. The Jacksonian ethos had its origins in

the southwestern frontier, where effective leadership depended on convincing settlers that you could secure their land and property.

Historians often depict Andrew Jackson as the harbinger of American democracy.¹ Jackson's auspicious political ascent occurred after he accused the popular Sevier of defrauding veterans and settlers of legitimate titles. This essay explores one instance of abuse, fraud, and corruption in frontier western land consolidation. The so-called "Glasgow conspiracy" that occurred between 1783-1800 exposed many of the problems surrounding western land claims and provided a catalyst for a young Andrew Jackson to secure his position in the ranks of Tennessee's early political establishment. In order to understand the conspiracy, it is important to recognize the background that enabled the fraud to occur.

North Carolina Bounty Grants and Jurisdictional Confusion in the Southwest Territory

North Carolina's western land policy during the colonial and revolutionary period shaped the nature of settlement and institution building west of the Appalachian Mountains. The General Assembly passed approximately 615 laws from 1780 to 1790. Of these, at least 103 dealt with boundary or jurisdictional issues. Thirty-five laws specifically dealt with boundaries, and sixty-eight with the administration of counties and towns. A universal theme in these laws was an expressed demand for "convenience"

¹ This is an exhaustive list, but Sean Wilentz offers what is arguably the most representative articulation of this view. Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Others of note include, Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson: The Course of American Empire, 1767-1821 Vol. 1*, *Andrew Jackson: The Course of American Freedom, 1822-1832, Vol. 2* and *Andrew Jackson: The Course of American Democracy, 1833-1845, Vol. 3* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). See also, Andrew Burstein, *The Passions of Andrew Jackson* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

in government.² The controversial land cession of 1784 and the resulting efforts of private speculators to erect functioning jurisdictions made it difficult for settlers to feel secure about their land titles. In 1777, the state passed a law establishing land offices in every county. Only these offices had the authority to enter and record land grants. The law was designed to promote an orderly and efficient settlement of western land. Under this law, individuals could claim vacant land based on the size of their families. An individual could claim 640 acres at a rate of £ 2.10 per 100 acres, with an additional 100 acres - at the same rate - for a spouse and each additional child. Tracts were limited to 5,000 acres.³

North Carolina issued Six types of land grants. “Purchase grants” came from warrants purchased in county offices in Hillsboro. “Military” or “bounty grants” as they were sometimes called, were issued to veterans of North Carolina’s Continental Line. The size of the grant was based on rank and length of service. “Pre-emption grants” were awarded to settlers in Middle Tennessee who had settled land before North Carolina surveyed and designated the area as a military district for veterans. Pre-emption grants were also issued in other areas to the first legal settler. “Surveyor grants,” sometimes called service grants, were issued as compensation to surveyors and their crew. “Commissioner grants” were issued to individuals appointed by the legislature to survey and map out the military reservation. “Legislative grants” were issued by the legislature for any other “special” reason. For example, Richard Henderson received a legislative

²North Carolina legislators passed 21 laws creating new towns from 1780 to 1789 as well as 16 laws for dividing counties. Most of the laws cited the change as a way to promote convenience. See *Laws of North Carolina*, 1783, ch.47; June 1784, ch.43, ch.44, ch.59; 1785, ch.59, ch.60, ch.61, ch.62, ch.63, ch.64, ch.65; 1786, ch.44, ch.53, ch.59, ch.76, ch.78, ch.81; 1787, ch.49; 1788, ch.42; 1789, ch.30, ch.31.

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/unc/unco1-08/unco1-08.html>

³ *Laws of North Carolina*, 1777, Ch. 1

grant for his Transylvania Company to settle Middle Tennessee before it became a military district. The warrant and survey for each grant was sent to the North Carolina Secretary of State's office, where the grant was prepared and signed. The grant was then returned to the entry takers office in the specific county "where the land lay" and recorded⁴ This system was intended to create an orderly process of western settlement for North Carolina. As new counties formed, managing local land records in local offices made sense.

Language in North Carolina's 1776 State Constitution assumed the inevitable formation of one or more governments "westward of this state [and by] consent of the legislature," but stipulating that the law should "not be construed so as to prevent" the establishment such states.⁵ In the meantime, North Carolina used the land to provide compensation for veterans by awarding bounty grants and divesting some of the financial obligations associated with managing western land. The state certainly had enough land in its possession to divest and simultaneously fulfill its obligation to veterans.

North Carolina's approach to land management was not unique. Other states sought to compensate soldiers and legitimize or manage their claims to western territory in the years just after independence. Land was often each state's most valuable commodity and offered opportunities for continued colonial expansion under its own

⁴ Irene M. Griffey, *Early North Carolina/Tennessee Land Grants at the Tennessee State Library and Archives*, <http://sos.tn.gov/products/tsla/early-north-carolina-tennessee-land-grants-tennessee-state-library-and-archives>

⁵ *North Carolina State Constitution of 1776*, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/nco7.asp

authority, at least until the federal system of land sales was introduced in 1785.⁶ Selling property was supposed to populate unsettled land with tax-paying citizens who would circulate specie and facilitate economic development.⁷

Militia officers in Rowan County - the base of former Regulator hostility - were among the first to seek land bounties for military service in 1778. Along with an annual bounty of 500 dollars, in 1780 the North Carolina Assembly promised soldiers with three years of service up to one hundred acres of land on the “Western waters” or one “prime slave” in exchange for three years of service.⁸ Veterans who served in state regiments of the Continental Line would be given warrants for land grants in Tennessee commensurate with their rank and duration of service. Land would be distributed based on the following schedule:

<u>Rank</u>	<u># of Acres</u>
Private	640
Non-commissioned Officer	1000
Surgeon’s Mate	2560
Subaltern	2560
Captain	3840
Surgeon	4800
Major	4800
Lieutenant Colonel	5760

⁶ The 1784 Ordinance for Territorial Government outlined the process for the eventual incorporation of western land as new states in the union. See Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

⁷ Arthur Pendleton Hall, “State-Issued Bills of Credit and the United States Constitution: The Political Economy of Paper Money in Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina, 1780-1789” (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 1991), 109-120.

⁸ Report by a committee of the North Carolina General Assembly concerning instructions from the Continental Congress North Carolina, Walter Clark (ed.), *The State Records of North Carolina, [SRNC]* (Raleigh: State of North Carolina, 1896-1905), April 24, 1780, 15: 197-198. See also, *Laws of North Carolina*, May 1780, ch.25.

Chaplain	7200
Colonel	7200
Brigadier General	12000

Any soldier, from the lowliest private to brigadier general, was entitled to a plot of land in the newly created “Mero District,” a military reservation along the Cumberland River, near what would become Nashville. The law was meant to offer some relief for those soldiers who had “suffered by depreciation.”⁹ But many soldiers opted out of the deal because of the remote location of the reserved land. They also realized that the poor documentation process meant they could sell their grants by assigning them to non-veterans. All it took to transfer a warrant was a signature, and the records suggest that there was not way to verify the authenticity of a transfer. This enabled fraudulent activity around the issuing of military bounty grants and helped speculators gain control of as much western land as possible even as North Carolina was striving to maintain some level of sovereignty.

Although North Carolina finally ceded its western land to the United States in 1790, it retained control of the Mero District, and they were still obligated to uphold the bounty warrants.¹⁰ Martin Armstrong was placed in charge of the Nashville (Mero) land office, where he was authorized to issue grants – from North Carolina – to lands both inside and outside of the Mero District. In order to secure a bounty grant in the Mero

⁹ The Mero District was precisely defined as the area “situated between the Virginia line and the rivers Tenasee and Holston, as far up as the mouth of the French Broad river; thence a direct course, to the mouth of Powell's river; thence a direct course, to great gap in Cumberland mountain, about twenty miles southwest of the Kentucky road, where it strikes Cumberland mountain thence a north course to the Virginia line.” *Laws of North Carolina*, May 1782, ch.3.

¹⁰ Kristopher Ray, *Middle Tennessee: Progress and Popular Democracy on the Southwestern Frontier*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 13.

District, a veteran obtained a warrant from the Secretary of State based on sufficient documentation of military service. The veteran then delivered the warrant to the land office in Nashville, whereupon Armstrong ordered a survey and plat. Given the relatively remote location of the Mero District for many North Carolina veterans, as well as the possibility of immediate payment, selling one's bounty warrant made sense in many cases. A land grant assignment was as simple as obtaining written statements such as the one below, which were easily and often forged.

Mr. James Glasgow Secretary of State,

I have received of William Blount valuable and full consideration

for my Right, Title, Interest and Claim in and to the land within mentioned and to whom you will please issue the Grant accordingly - May 23, 1784

Isaac Rollston

Witness, Enoch Ward.¹¹

Native-American claims also complicated the situation. The federal government had already returned some of the land set aside for bounty grants to the Cherokee in the Hopewell Treaty of 1785. Under the new constitution, only Congress could negotiate with Indians, so North Carolina land offices and speculators had to work with both the state and federal government to recover land that they thought should still be within their jurisdiction. Securing this western land for settlement required the three parties - speculators, the state, and federal government - all working together. Richard Henderson's Transylvania Company, for example, lost part of its territory as a result of

¹¹ *Secretary of State Land Grants*, File Number 29, Davidson County, Tennessee, William Blount, North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. [NCDAH] Cited in Russell Scott Koontz, *An Angel Has Fallen: The Glasgow Land Frauds and the Establishment of the North Carolina Supreme Court*, (MA Thesis: North Carolina State University, 1995), 17.

the Hopewell Treaty, but managed to get partially reimbursed by the state of North Carolina after asking for help from Congress, who had authority over Indian treaties.¹² In another example, twenty thousand acres of western land donated by Benjamin Smith to the state's chartered university was discovered to be in Cherokee territory. The University Trustees petitioned the General Assembly and Congress hoping to get reimbursed for the cost of the land.¹³

Not everyone was happy that North Carolina continued exercising jurisdiction over part of the land it ceded to the federal government. Many of the people living in the region had come from the quasi-independent settlements of Watauga or Franklin. They had long ago severed their political attachments to North Carolina and were upset that the state had not recognized their land claims. During the Confederation era, when speculators maintained a functioning government in Franklin and Cumberland, settlers felt fully capable of maintaining their own sovereignty and didn't need North Carolina's protection. In 1782, Captain Martin Armstrong informed General Jethro Sumner that the number of settlers around the Cumberland River had increased to a level in which their militias could presumably defend their land claims against seizure, even if many of their settlements were on land intended for military bounty grants.¹⁴ Strong and effective leadership was needed to reassure settlers and bring order to the jurisdictional

¹² U.S. House of Representatives, *Petitions Memorials and Other Documents*, 260.

¹³ Petition of the Trustees of the University, *General Assembly Session Records [GASR]* 1793, Box 3; Memorial of the Trustees of the University of North Carolina, *Annals of Congress*, 2nd Congress, 1st Session, 528; R.D.W. Connor, *A Documentary History of the University of North Carolina, 1776-1799*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1963). Benjamin Smith served as an Aide-de-Camp to George Washington during the Revolutionary War, served in the North Carolina constitutional convention, was a two-term member of the North Carolina Assembly, and served as the state's sixteenth governor. The state did ultimately get reimbursed and used the funds to build a chapel on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

http://museum.unc.edu/exhibits/early_benefactors/benjamin-smith-1756-1826-1/

¹⁴ Captain Martin Armstrong to Brigadier General Jethro Sumner, February 26, 1782 in Clark (ed.), *SRNC*, 16:524-526.

confusion in the West. William Blount, John Sevier and others in the Muscle Shoals Land Company attempted to control western settlement by organizing the state of Franklin and the Cumberland Compact. But even after Franklin's collapse, speculators still hoped to exercise sovereignty over the region and to avoid dealing with North Carolina.¹⁵ So when North Carolina once again ceded its land to the federal government in 1790, they saw another opportunity to profit from western land and expand their colonial enterprise. Once again, Blount and Sevier were in positions of political power that helped facilitate their speculative interests.

The Southwest Territory and the Creation of Tennessee

One year after North Carolina's ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1789, the trans-Appalachian counties came under the control of the federal government as part of the Southwest Territory. The North Carolina General Assembly voted to cede the state's western lands to Congress by a large margin in April of 1790.¹⁶ Unlike its 1784 predecessor, this cession did not lead to escalating jurisdictional confusion and political conflict. Settlers and speculators soon recognized the impossibility of sustaining their independent enterprises in the Franklin or Cumberland regions. They instead welcomed the cession and the prospect of effective federal governance. One North Carolinian approved the cession because it would allow the state to finally "be rid of a people who

¹⁵ William Blount, John Sevier, and other prominent western land speculators had been heavily involved in the Muscle Shoals Land Company and other efforts to control the region around the "Great Bend" of the Tennessee River since at least 1783. By 1790, Blount believed that using federal territorial authority was the best means for acquiring large tracts of western land.

¹⁶ The cession bill passed by forty votes in the House of Commons and by seventeen votes in the Senate. *Journal of the House*, 1789 session, in Clark (ed.), *SRNC*, 21:345-346; *Journal of the Senate*, 1789 session, in Clark (ed.), *SRNC*, 21:679.

were [a] pest and burthen to us.”¹⁷ The land was officially organized as the Southwest Territory on May 26, 1790, with the staunch Federalist William Blount serving as governor.¹⁸

Lest anyone in the West think they were now free from North Carolina control, the cession included provisions that Congress reserve certain parcels of land for bounty grants and preemption rights for titles already granted.¹⁹ This designated land would be organized into a separate district, or military reservation. The reservation became a site of contention and controversy because North Carolina had difficulty effectively managing the land granting process in such a distant area. Multiple land offices, overlapping jurisdictions, and individuals competing for political power in the Southwest Territory required a strong governing presence capable of reassuring settlers that their property and communities were secure. The result had a lasting effect on the development of a federal republican union in the aftermath of American independence because the controversies surrounding the control of these lands ultimately propelled a new frontier elite into national prominence. Some of these men, such as Andrew Jackson, would have a profound effect on the development of American democracy.

¹⁷ Archibald Maclaine to James Iredell, December 22, 1789 in Don Higginbotham (ed.), *The Papers of James Iredell*, (Raleigh: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, 1976) 3:552. Archibald Maclaine was a prominent member of North Carolina’s constitutional convention, supporting the document from the beginning. He was also an early trustee of the University of North Carolina. See; John R. Maass, “The Cure for All Our Political Calamities: Archibald Maclaine and the Politics of Moderation in Revolutionary North Carolina”, *The North Carolina Historical Review* 85 (July, 2008); William Powell ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography: Vol. 4 L-O* (Chapel Hill, 1996).

¹⁸ The territorial government office was an important incubator for the future political leadership in Tennessee. Other members included John Sevier, James Robertson, and Andrew Jackson.

¹⁹ There were also provisions that those living in the newly ceded territory would not factor into North Carolina’s portion of the war debt. The specific language concerning the state’s war debt says, “that neither the lands nor inhabitants westward of the said mountain shall be estimated, after the cession made by virtue of this act shall be accepted, in ascertaining the proportion of this state with the United States in the common expense occasioned by the late war,” *Laws of North Carolina, 1789*, ch.3.

Settler demand for secure land titles and protection from Indian attacks presented the newly appointed governor William Blount with a difficult challenge. The federal government required that Blount, the land companies with whom he partnered, and the settlers whom he governed, respect boundary agreements with the Cherokee. The Hopewell Treaty promised the Indians sovereignty over large portions of trans-Appalachian land, but these treaties had been consistently opposed by western settlers. Blount was more interested in preserving and expanding his speculative activity and getting the support of settlers, so he disregarded the Hopewell Treaty. Instead, he used his position as governor for the advancement of his speculative interests. In order to appease the people of the Territory, and to assure the establishment of a new territorial capital at Knoxville in 1791, Blount relied on the tactics used by his partners in the Muscle Shoals Company or Richard Henderson, and negotiated his own treaty with the Cherokee. The Treaty of Holston granted Blount's government rights to the land south of the French Broad River, and also promised to maintain peaceful relations. Less than one year later, Secretary of War Henry Knox signed off on Blount's Holston Treaty.²⁰ Successfully negotiating a new boundary gave settlers confidence the Territorial government could effectively secure their claims.

²⁰ Enclosure: Report, 17 January 1792, *Founders Online*, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-09-02-0273-0002> [last update: 2016-03-28]). Source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Presidential Series, vol. 9, 23 September 1791–29 February 1792, ed. Mark A. Mastromarino. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), pp. 449–452. See also, Walter T. Durham, "The Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio," *Before Tennessee: The Southwest Territory, 1790–1796* (Rocky Mount Historical Association, 1990), 31-46. John Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 125-151.

Tennessee began its path to statehood very soon after the creation of the Southwest Territory in 1790.²¹ According to the Territorial Government Ordinance of 1784, once a territory had a population of 20,000, they could form a constitutional convention and begin the process of becoming a state. But even with the requisite population, territories needed effective governments capable of implementing congressional land policy, protecting jurisdictional boundaries, and securing land titles.²² A 1791 census for the Southwest Territory reported a population of 35,961 people, making the region eligible to begin the process of statehood.²³ When a territory reached 60,000 or more inhabitants it could be granted statehood with congressional approval. These requirements remained basically the same under the federal Constitution of 1789, and stated that new states may be admitted by Congress and that states seeking admission must have a republican government and the requisite population. A territorial census conducted in 1795 reported a population of 77,262 inhabitants, making it eligible for admission.

The Southwest Territory consisted of approximately 43,000 square miles of land in what is now Tennessee. What became Kentucky was still part of Virginia, and the areas south of Tennessee were claimed by Georgia, Spain, or one of three Native-American powers, the Cherokee, Creek, or Choctaw. The territory was divided into three separate districts, each with its own system of courts, militias, and government offices. Two of these districts, including Washington County (the former site of Franklin) were

²¹ The Southwest Territory was created by the Southwest Ordinance, which was adapted from the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 in order to accommodate slavery. The Territory existed from May 26, 1790, until June 1, 1796, when it was admitted to the union as the new state of Tennessee.

²² Peter S. Onuf, *Statehood and Union: A History of the Northwest Ordinance*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

²³ Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*, 149.

in eastern Tennessee, while the the Mero District was further west, along the Cumberland River.²⁴ The Mero District and the western settlements in general were far less secure and more vulnerable to Indian attacks. Moreover, because North Carolina was still offering bounty grants in the district to military veterans, disputes over land and security proved frequent. The Cumberland region was ultimately the site of a frontier governing ethos that emerged in the person of Andrew Jackson. This new model of leadership reshaped the political culture of the early republic by elevating those who

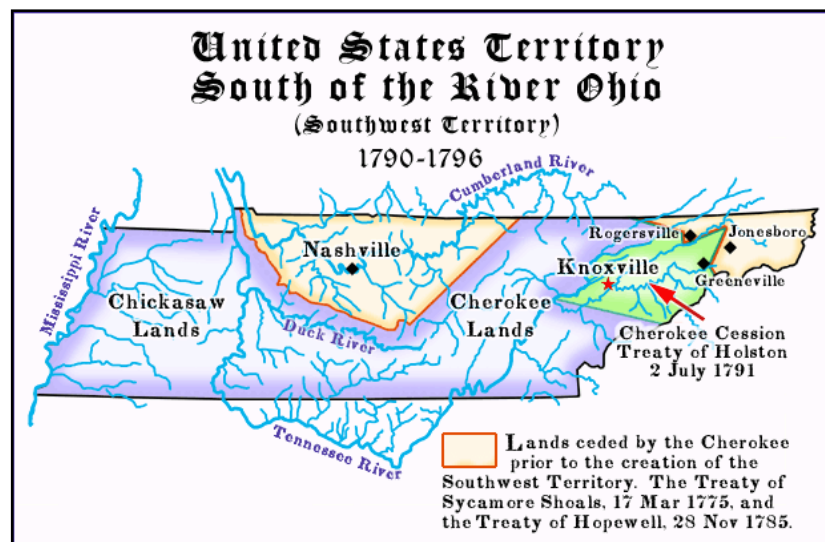


Image courtesy,
[http://www.tngenweb.org/tnletters/territories/sw-](http://www.tngenweb.org/tnletters/territories/sw-territory.html)

could bring order to chaotic situations like those that defined the southwestern frontier.

Historian Kristopher Ray describes the “territorial phase” of Tennessee history as being governed by a “small clique of surveyors and speculators” who controlled most of

²⁴ Walter T. Durham, "The Territory of the United States South of the River Ohio," *Before Tennessee: The Southwest Territory, 1790–1796* (Rocky Mount Historical Association, 1990).

the governing institutions.²⁵ These were many of the same men, particularly William Blount and John Sevier, who had organized the Muscle Shoals Company and governed the state of Franklin in the 1780s. Tennessee's path to statehood in 1796, began with loosely organized jurisdictions in places like Watauga or Cumberland, followed by the separatist state of Franklin, and finally a federally controlled territory. Throughout this entire period, power was held by a small group of men who used their land companies as a basis for colonization schemes. They used their control of land to win the support of western settlers who were primarily concerned with securing their land titles. This progression reveals an important story about the role of western land in the formation of a successful American union.

On January 11, 1796 representatives from 11 counties met in Knoxville to draft a constitution for the new state of Tennessee. The delegates included some of the most powerful men from each county, with William Blount presiding.²⁶ There was no precedent for an existing territory to petition for statehood, so the delegates sought to construct a functional government by using existing state constitutions as models. This was exactly what happened in Watauga, Franklin, and Cumberland when those settlers

²⁵ Kristopher Ray, *Middle Tennessee, 1775-1825*, xvii

²⁶ The following is a list of representatives from each county: Jefferson County: Joseph Anderson; George Doherty; Alexander Outlaw; William Roddy; Archibald Roane. Hawkins County: James Berry; William Cocke; Thomas Henderson; Joseph McMinn; Richard Mitchell. Greene County: Elisha Baker; Stephen Brooks; Samuel Frazier; John Galbraith; William Rankin. Knox County: John Adair; William Blount; John Crawford; Charles McClung; James White. Washington County: Landon Carter; Samuel Handley; James Stuart; Leroy Taylor; John Tipton. Sullivan County: William C. C. Claiborne; Richard Gammon; George Rutledge; John Rhea; John Shelby, Jr. Sevier County: Peter Bryan; Thomas Buckingham; John Clack; Samuel Wear; Spencer Clack. Blount County: Joseph Black; David Craig; Samuel Glass; James Greenaway; James Houston. Davidson County: Thomas Hardman; Andrew Jackson; Joel Lewis; John McNairy; James Robertson. Sumner County: Edward Douglas; W. Douglas; Daniel Smith; D. Shelby; Isaac Walton. Tennessee County: James Ford; William Fort; Robert Prince; William Prince; Thomas Johnson. http://www.tennesseegenealogy.org/history/statehood_of_tennessee.htm. See also, Will T. Hale. *A History of Tennessee and Tennesseans: The Leaders and Representative Men in Commerce, Industry and Modern Activities*, (Chicago: Lewis Pub. Co., 1913).

organized political jurisdictions. The convention decided that John Sevier should serve as governor of the new state. William Blount and William Cocke were chosen as Senators, and Andrew Jackson was selected to serve in the House of Representatives.²⁷ Congress was divided over whether or not to admit Tennessee as the sixteenth state. The debate was mostly split along political lines. Thomas Jefferson allegedly described the Tennessee state constitution as “the least imperfect and most republican of the state constitutions.”²⁸ It was certainly a political wedge issue between the emerging political factions in Congress. The Democratic-Republicans were far more favorable toward admitting Tennessee than their Federalist counterparts. One of the reasons the Federalists opposed Tennessee statehood was the concern that voters in the new state would overwhelmingly support Jefferson in the upcoming election of 1796. Federalists in Congress held up the vote on procedural grounds, questioning the manner in which Tennessee conducted its census. They ultimately compromised and voted to admit the new state on June 1, 1796.

Tennessee became the first federal territory to enter the Union as a state, and it was also the first state to undergo the constitutional mandates for entry; Vermont and Kentucky became the fourteenth and fifteenth states in the union as a result of an agreement made in 1791, but did not have to follow the procedures for admission outlined in the Constitution. Tennessee thus offers an interesting case study in state formation and the consolidation of the union under the new federal Constitution as well as the way settlers, speculators, and separatist states negotiated the establishment of a

²⁷ Finger, *Tennessee Frontiers*,

²⁸ Samuel Cole Williams made this claim in his early works on the history of Tennessee. More recent historians like H.W. Brands have made it as well. It has not been sufficiently verified so as to be attributed to Jefferson.

new nation. Finally, Tennessee became an incubator of a new political culture that reshaped expectations of leadership during the early republic. At the center of the new political culture was Andrew Jackson.

Leadership, Self-Interest, and Land Fraud

In his account of Jackson's character and personality, historian Andrew Burstein describes Jackson as bursting "from obscurity and into a series of self-made controversies" after arriving in the Tennessee frontier in 1788. He represented a new type of distinctively "American" leadership that valued a defiant bravado, Burstein says. His leadership style "awakened a whole generation...the children of the republic's founders."²⁹ There is no disputing Jackson's importance to early nineteenth-century American political culture, nor that he was at least partially influenced by his experiences living in the western frontier. One of the "self-made controversies" that enabled Jackson to rise in Tennessee politics was his exposure of the Glasgow land fraud scheme involving North Carolina military bounty grants.

By implicating prominent Tennesseans like John Sevier and Stockley Donelson, Jackson was able to gain the attention of Tennessee's political elite as well as ordinary settlers. Although his accusations against Sevier were not immediately harmful, they taught him a valuable political lesson; settlers' loyalty was based on confidence in their leaders' ability to protect their property claims, which they believed Sevier had done in Franklin. Jackson also learned that frontier settlers valued the political strength and

²⁹ Andrew Burstein, *The Passions of Andrew Jackson*, xiii.

military achievement that Sevier had earned as the leader of the Overmountain Men militia at King's Mountain and as governor. Jackson subsequently began to present himself as the sort of strong and effective leader that settlers had long demanded, one who could protect them from the fraud and abuse of speculators or ineffective state governments. Jackson's public image became - and remains - that of a populist democrat who represented ordinary people. The extent to which this is a realistic assessment is debatable, but during the 1790s, as a relative newcomer to frontier politics, Jackson now knew how to make a name for himself, by becoming more like Sevier.

The politically savvy Andrew Jackson seized the opportunity to expose corruption among land-jobbers and the established political elite that had controlled the Southwest Territory since its earliest settlement. Though Jackson did not immediately weaken Sevier's popularity, their resulting feud made clear what settlers expected. The ambitious Jackson adjusted accordingly, pursuing his military career and working to convince people that he was the sort of leader who could bring order to the frontier.

The Glasgow scheme pivoted on the unauthorized transfer of military bounty grants in North Carolina's Mero District. The alleged frauds largely occurred during Martin Armstrong's tenure as entry taker from 1784 to 1789 when speculators pressured veterans to relinquish their warrants for bounty lands. Speculators accumulated large numbers of warrants that enabled them to gain extensive land grants from North Carolina Secretary of State James Glasgow. The fraudulence of these transactions was hotly contested at the time, but they certainly subverted North Carolina's original intention to compensate Revolutionary War veterans with western land. The potential

for political spin was enormous, and Andrew Jackson used this as an opportunity to advance his own prestige in the Tennessee frontier.

A 1794 North Carolina congressional report commented on the presence of some very large grants coming through Secretary Glasgow's office. Many of these were bounty grants from Tennessee. A legislative committee was subsequently formed to investigate the legitimacy of these grants, as well as the possibility of land fraud in the Secretary's office. The committee discovered land entries totaling more than one million acres, including some indication of fraud, that is, grants issued for non-veterans or the conglomeration of multiple grants issued to known speculators. Recognizing the history of problems associated with jurisdictional legitimacy and speculation in western lands, the committee suggested that the public be informed via the newspapers in order to assure the integrity of the land granting process.³⁰

William Blount's brother, John Gray Blount, was particularly implicated in the fraud. Blount was from a prominent and powerful family and his reputation was significantly harmed by the committee's findings. One of his other brothers, Thomas, was also involved in this and other questionable land deals. William Blount, of course, had a long history of speculation in western land with the Muscle Shoals Company and as governor of the Southwest Territory. The family was in an ideal position to facilitate illegal land deals without consequence. Thomas Blount, who was at this time serving in Congress, passed along information about pertinent land markets to John Gray, because

³⁰ *Journal of the House of Commons*, 1794 session, 22; *Journal of the Senate*, 1794 session, 41; *Journal of the House of Commons*, 1794 session, 42-43 *Journal of the Senate*, 1794 session, 47; *North Carolina Journal* (Halifax), March 9, 1795.

he knew that land was his “hobby-horse.”³¹ The Creek Indians referred to William Blount as, “Fusse Mico” - the “Dirt King” - because he was so obsessed with land.³²

Western Land Entry books show that grants were issued on multiple warrants to Thomas and John Gray Blount as well as the surveyor, former Franklinite, and state legislator Stockley Donelson.³³ Donelson, in fact, received more land than anyone else during the Glasgow fraud.³⁴ The same warrant showed two grants to Thomas and John Gray Blount. The first, which was surveyed by John Donelson (Stockley’s father) on August 30, 1792 and issued on June 27, 1793, consisted of a 5,000 acre tract of land on the south fork of Duck River. The second, which was surveyed by Stockley Donelson on November 6, 1792 and issued on April 26, 1794, consisted of 95,000 acres on the southeast side of Clinch River in Knox County. The latter consisted of eighteen warrants for 5,000 acres each, many of which produced additional grants.³⁵ The Blounts and Stockely Donelson were key architects in the scheme, but other prominent Tennesseans were also implicated, most importantly perhaps, John Sevier.

Correspondence from 1790 between William and John Gray Blount indicates a proposed scheme by John Sevier to use “old warrants” which were valued at “£50 paper

³¹ Thomas Blount to John Gray Blount, January 11, 1794, in Alice Barnwell Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*, (Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Archives and History) 2:342. Included in the Blount papers are accounts detailing the speculating activities among other North Carolina officials. Some of the officials mentioned include, Abishai Thomas (agent of the state responsible for war debts), William Polk (Commissioner of Revenue), Hugh Williamson (Congressman from Edenton District), and Gabriel Ragsdale (State representative from Buncombe County).

³² Benjamin Hawkins, *A Sketch of the Creek Country, in the Years 1798 and 1799 and Letters of Benjamin Hawkins 1796-1806* (Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, 1974), 250.

³³ Stockley Donelson was the son of John Donelson and Rachel Stockely. John Donelson was one of the founders of Nashville. Stockely and his father were both surveyors by trade. Stockely Donelson’s sister, Rachel Donelson, would ultimately marry Andrew Jackson, making this a particularly intriguing familial web.

³⁴ For a complete account of grants received during the Glasgow fraud, see the chart at the end of this essay.

³⁵ *Secretary of State Land Grants*, File 245, Middle District, Tennessee, John Gray Blount and Thomas Blount (Warrant No. [1663]); *Secretary of State Land Grants*, File 646, Hawkins County, Tennessee, John Gray Blount and Thomas Blount (18 Warrants). [NCDAH]

money per 100 acres and can be levied on lands south of the French Broad which can be sold at £10 per 100 [acres] payable in cattle at cash price...without a warrantee on the producing grant from North Carolina.”³⁶ In 1779, under the authority of a controversial Confiscation Act, Sevier and Landon Carter (the entry taker for what was then Washington County) purchased 128,000 acres of land that had been confiscated from individuals accused of being loyalists. According to the law, such lands had to be entered at the rate of fifty shillings per one hundred acres in the county where the land was located.³⁷ The act was only in place until 1781, which presented a problem when many loyalists tried to reclaim their land after repeal of the Act.

Sevier suggested a solution to Glasgow for resolving the discrepancy over claims from lands he purchased and those confiscated from loyalists. He proposed using a 1783 law that required land to be entered at £10 per 100 acres, in order to "have ten pounds inserted in the room of fifty shillings" on the warrants he had purchased. If Glasgow agreed, the records would indicate that Sevier had obtained the lands under the act of 1783 rather than 1779. To persuade Glasgow, Sevier offered "a plat of the amount of three 640 acres . . . in case you can conceive that the three warrants will be adequate.”³⁸ This meant that rather than the £12,800 it would have appeared that Sevier paid for the land, he would have actually only paid £3,200. But Sevier would need even more help from Glasgow to actually secure the formerly confiscated land since some of the warrant numbers had already been issued as grants in Washington County. Sevier suggested

³⁶ William Blount to John Gray Blount, Sept. 22, 1790, in Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*, vol. 2,, 139.

³⁷ Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1932), 174

³⁸ John Sevier to James Glasgow, November 11, 1795, *Official Correspondence of the Secretary of State*, Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh. See also, Koontz, *An Angel Has Fallen*.

using a 1784 law that said if grants overlapped, the land would go to the most recent, or “supernumerary,” grantee. Under this law entries were made sequentially, meaning there could not be two grants to two different individuals with the same number.³⁹ All Sevier had to do was prove his warrants were supernumerary. Of course, they weren’t, but the records had disappeared from Landon Carter’s entry office in Washington County. Using his authority as Secretary of State, James Glasgow confirmed the supremacy of Sevier’s warrants under the 1784 law.⁴⁰

Over time, other allegations of corruption against Glasgow’s office emerged. The most damaging of all the allegations levied against the Glasgow office involved forgeries and misappropriations of bounty warrants. Martin Armstrong, the entry taker for the Mero District land office, and Stockley Donelson, who was responsible for surveying land designated for bounty grants, invited Glasgow to partner with them in buying military land warrants for the purpose of reselling them.⁴¹ Armstrong and Donelson insisted that their scheme was legitimate but told Secretary Glasgow that they should nevertheless “keep these matters secret...nor the right hand know what the left hand is doing.”⁴² But considering the long history of corruption and confusion in western land speculation, it’s not surprising that people were suspicious. In 1790, territorial governor William Blount asked his brother to keep him abreast of Glasgow’s land office as “people are weekly passing from there to the ceded territory about land business.”⁴³ Over the next ten years, 3,723 warrants, totaling 2,789,224 acres were issued in what would

³⁹ *Laws of North Carolina*, 1784, c. 19

⁴⁰ Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation*, 175.

⁴¹ Walter T. Durham, *Before Tennessee*, 218.

⁴² Armstrong and Donelson to Glasgow, June 12, 1794, *Coffee Papers*, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN.

⁴³ William Blount to John Gray Blount, Sept. 22, 1790, in Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*, vol. 2, 120-121.

become Tennessee.⁴⁴ During this time, land offices and speculators in both Tennessee and North Carolina were engaged in legally questionable transactions that helped create the political leadership of early Tennessee and to an extent, the nation. In fact, one of the most significant things about this scandal is the extent to which it elevated Andrew Jackson within Tennessee politics after he exposed Sevier as being complicit in the alleged fraud.

Andrew Jackson first reported the inconsistent and potentially fraudulent activity in 1797 while serving as part of Tennessee's newly appointed Congressional delegation. Jackson had close connections with some of the key players involved in the scheme. William Blount had been his patron, helping him obtain his first legal appointment after moving to Nashville. Jackson had provided security for one of the Blount's associates, David Allison, and his wife Rachel was Stockley Donelson's sister.⁴⁵ As further evidence of the entangled kinship and patronage webs that defined the frontier, Donelson eventually married one of James Glasgow's daughters.⁴⁶ These connections enabled Jackson to hear about many of the inner workings of frontier land policy in North Carolina and the Southwest Territory from the perspective of government officials as well as speculators. The records are not clear whether it was John or Charles Love of Virginia who told Jackson about an encounter in which one of them witnessed a

⁴⁴ Daniel Jansen, "A Case of Fraud and Deception: The Revolutionary War Military Land Bounty Policy in Tennessee," *The Journal of East Tennessee History* 64, 1992, 52.

⁴⁵ Some might think that Jackson exposed the fraud in order to seek revenge against his brother-in-law, Stockley Donelson for telling him that Rachel Donelson's divorce from her first husband had been granted by the Virginia legislature even though it had not. The result, of course, was that Jackson and Rachel Donelson were accused of living in bigamy, the allegations of which plagued him throughout his career. This is an unlikely interpretation.

⁴⁶ For more on kinship in the southwestern frontier, see Natalie Inman, *Networks in Negotiation: The Role of Family and Kinship In Intercultural Diplomacy on the Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 1680-1840*, Dissertation: Vanderbilt University, 2010.

drunken veteran being coerced by North Carolina land agent William Tyrrell into signing over his bounty warrants to speculators.⁴⁷ Love reported that Tyrrell and his agents encouraged the veterans through generous servings of “peach brandy” and “a large bowl of apple toddy” from which they were “pressed to drink...very freely.” After “becoming very much intoxicated [he] was induced by the persuasions of the men...to sign nearly five hundred” military warrants. Since it was a problem for one person to sign so many warrants without a corroborating officer to “countersign” them, Tyrrell reportedly found a Captain (who was not named in the report) to authenticate the forged signatures.⁴⁸

Jackson informed North Carolina Senator Alexander Martin of what he had overheard and subsequently sent a letter to North Carolina Governor Samuel Ashe detailing the accusation.⁴⁹ Governor Ashe was angered by the possibility of state-sponsored land fraud, particularly the allegation that Secretary of State James Glasgow was complicit in a systematic scheme to usurp land intended for Continental Line veterans. Still, the governor was not surprised, acknowledging what he described as the “continual buzzing of the flies about the office [of Glasgow].”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ In an enclosed letter from Alexander Martin to Governor Samuel Ashe from December 6, 1797, Jackson named John Love as his informant, but in a letter to John Overton in January of 1798, Jackson refers to the informant as Charles Love. Sam B. Smith and Harriet Chapelle Owsley (ed.), *The Papers of Andrew Jackson, Vol. 1, 1770-1803* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980-present), 157, 171. Indeed, Jackson enclosed a letter from Charles J. Love, dated January 31, 1798 in a letter to Samuel Ashe. In that enclosure, Love reiterates his story, saying “it always gives me pleasure to detect villains and will at any time ride to Alexandria to give [a deposition].” Andrew Jackson to Samuel Ashe, February 10, 1798, in Owsley (ed.), *Jackson Papers, Vol. 1* 179-180.

⁴⁸ Statement Regarding Land Frauds, in Owsley (ed.), *Jackson Papers, Vol. 1*, 157.

⁴⁹ A.B. Pruitt, *Glasgow Land Fraud Papers, 1783-1800: North Carolina Revolutionary War Bounty Land in Tennessee*, (A.B. Pruitt, 1988), 4. Manuscript and documents held in the Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, TN. Andrew Jackson’s Statement Regarding Land Frauds, December 6, 1797 in Owsley, (ed.), *Jackson Papers, Vol 1.*, 157-158.

⁵⁰ Governor’s Message, Dec. 12, *Legislative Papers*, Nov.-Dec., 1797, in Clark (ed.) *SRNC*.

Governor Ashe acknowledged “strong grounds to presume” that a “number and variety of frauds... have been committed, with procuring military warrants and grants, in all stages of business both on this and the other side of the mountains.”⁵¹ The governor ordered that Martin Armstrong’s land office turn over any papers concerning military bounty warrants to Judge John McNairy and Judge Howell Tatum, North Carolina’s land agent in Tennessee. On February 8, 1798 the judges informed the governor that they had received the papers and noticed several instances of “fraud and misconduct” emanating from the Nashville land office.⁵²

Governor Ashe asked the North Carolina legislature to form an investigatory committee to examine summary reports of the evidence that Martin Armstrong provided the two judges.⁵³ After an initial review the committee determined there was enough evidence to have a Board of Inquiry investigate the process of how military bounty warrants were issued, as well as the subsequent land grants. Martin Armstrong wrote to Governor Ashe that he discovered “many thousand acres of land grants as service rights (for surveyors), two grants for the same tract, and a large quantity covered by the line run by the late commissioners appointed by Congress, all of which are charged to the surveyors.”⁵⁴ In other words, surveyors were granting land to themselves, thereby defrauding veterans. The preliminary evidence was compelling enough that the

⁵¹ Edward Jones to Samuel Ashe, March 17, 1798, *Governor’s Papers: Samuel Ashe, 1796-1798*, vol. 21, (Raleigh: North Carolina State Library and Archives).

⁵² *Governor’s Papers: Samuel Ashe, 1796-1798*, vol. 21, (Raleigh: North Carolina State Library and Archives).

⁵³ *Journal of the House*, 1797 session, 37.

⁵⁴ Martin Armstrong to Samuel Ashe, January 29, 1798, *Governor’s Papers: Samuel Ashe, 1796-1798*, vol. 21, (Raleigh: North Carolina State Library and Archives).

legislature closed the Nashville land office and demanded that Secretary of State Glasgow temporarily cease issuing any grants from military bounty warrants.⁵⁵

The committee recorded at least four areas of potentially fraudulent activity. They discovered that land warrants had been granted to individuals who were not entitled to land. In some cases, multiple warrants were issued for the same claim. Warrants were allegedly issued without proof of identity. And finally, there was evidence that warrants were based on fraudulent power of attorney signatures.⁵⁶ In another report on December 22, 1797, the committee revealed some of the methods used in the conspiracy, and implicated several of the people involved in the frauds. They also suggested a course for preventing such fraud in the future. The committee's report documented instances of speculators arranging "forged certificates and assignments of warrants," and suggested that a Board of Enquiry be created with "full power to examine the frauds committed." The report also recommended that the Secretary of State no longer have the authority to issue warrants for military service because he had "been unmindful in his duty and negligent in his office, and, as result, was guilty of a misdemeanor" and should be "immediately suspended from office." Finally, the committee demanded that Martin Armstrong's land office "be immediately closed and all the books and papers be given to the Board of Enquiry."⁵⁷

Records also suggest that the fraud permeated many levels of the North Carolina government. State Treasurer John Haywood, for example, was said to have been

⁵⁵ *Governor's Papers: Samuel Ashe, 1796-1798*, vol. 21, (Raleigh: North Carolina State Library and Archives).

⁵⁶ *Journal of the Senate*, 1798 session, 5-9. The committee's report specifically named Stockley Donelson, John Gray and Thomas Blount, William Tyrrell and others as the primary architects of the fraudulent scheme.

⁵⁷ House Messages, *GASR*, 1797.

receiving money from friends in exchange for supporting their various land speculations.⁵⁸ The Glasgow land fraud seemed to extend far beyond the Secretary of State's office. The allegations ultimately disrupted and reshaped the dynamics of frontier political power, ushering in a new era of leadership represented by men like Andrew Jackson.

Fallout from the Fraud

The Glasgow conspiracy exposed the problems of frontier land policy and the failure of state governments to effectively manage them. The allegations of fraud extended to the highest levels of Tennessee politics. Some of the most influential and powerful figures in the new state were implicated, including John Sevier (revolutionary war hero and governor of both Tennessee and the former State of Franklin), William Blount (Southwest territorial governor and U.S. Senator), and Stockley Donelson (the state surveyor and Glasgow's son-in-law). Despite their seemingly obvious connections to the nefarious activities that took place in Armstrong's office under Glasgow's supervision most of Tennessee's leading speculators and political elite avoided any significant prosecution. Instead, the gavel fell on less prominent participants. This

⁵⁸ It was determined that Haywood lent money from land entry-takers to associates of John Gray and William Blount. John Gray Blount would be liable if he failed to repay what was borrowed. Because the entry-takers often submitted inaccurate or incomplete returns, it was difficult for the General Assembly to sufficiently examine the accounts and the full extent to which he misused state funds. See David Allison to John Gray Blount, February 13, 1796, in Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*, 3:16; David Allison and Thomas Blount to John Gray Blount and John Haywood, April 1, 1796, in Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*, 3:42-43; David Allison to John Gray Blount, April 29, 1796, in Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*, 3:52-53.

helped the emerging leaders of the Cumberland region retain much of their political clout and continue expanding their land holdings and influence in Tennessee.

A grand jury in the district court of Fayetteville (North Carolina) issued a presentment against John Gray Blount in October, 1794. The court warned against what they saw as an attempt to create land monopolies with “legions of tenants” that would ultimately create a hereditary nobility.⁵⁹ Not surprisingly, Blount dismissed the grand jury’s proceedings as an illegitimate exercise of state authority and an affront to his rights and economic freedom. One of Blount’s colleagues asked, “What the devil have Grand Juries to do with the business are they to direct whether I shall be permitted to use my money legally.”⁶⁰ Most of the alleged fraud occurred during the territorial phase of Tennessee history, but the political consequences unfolded as allegations were made against some of the most influential political players in North Carolina and the Southwest Territory.

Those accused in this conspiracy became even more suspect following an attempted break-in at Martin Armstrong’s land office. The break-in was designed to steal papers that might reveal fraudulent activity. Peter Bird, a servant of North Carolina Treasurer John Haywood, caught the culprits in the act, but they escaped on foot, apparently without any of the documents they had been looking for. The only person ever apprehended for the break-in was a slave of William Tyrrell (one of those accused) named “Phil,” who was subsequently hanged.⁶¹ Although the thieves did not obtain any

⁵⁹ Presentment of the Grand Jury of Fayette District, October Term 1794, in Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*, 2:650-655.

⁶⁰ David Allison to John Gray Blount, November 27, 1794 in Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*, 2:461.

⁶¹ *North Carolina Journal* (Halifax), May 7, 1798; Stephen B. Weeks and Charles L. Van Noppen, *Biographical History of North Carolina*, vol. 7 (Greensboro, NC, 1908), 115-121.

documents, their actions occurred just as the Board of Inquiry was beginning its investigation, making it seem as though there was definitely something to hide. Around the same time it was reported that some of the other accused conspirators met at William Blount's Knoxville home to burn any remaining evidence.⁶²

After learning of this attempted theft, Governor Ashe sent a handpicked delegation to retrieve the land office papers from Knoxville, then the state capital. He specifically wanted the papers related to military land warrants. John Sevier, as well as Judges McNairy and Howell, refused to turn over the documents for fear that they might "be altered" if taken back to North Carolina. After some deliberation, Sevier agreed to let Ashe's delegation transcribe of the documents and take them back to North Carolina.⁶³ Included in the transcriptions were a portion of documents from other Tennessee officials, including a collection of William Tyrrell's private papers. The information in these papers provided enough evidence to prove the existence of fraud as well as bring charges against some of the people involved.⁶⁴ Tyrrell's papers contained several examples of altered bounty warrants where the original owners name had been removed and left blank, presumably so that it could be transferred to someone who had not actually served in the Continental Line.

The North Carolina legislature postponed any decisive action on addressing accusations of land fraud until Governor Ashe's committee released a second report detailing the activity.⁶⁵ Samuel Ashe left the governor's office in December 1798 after serving three one-year terms, but his commission continued its investigation and

⁶² Ray, *Middle Tennessee*, 37.

⁶³ John Sevier to James Holland, *NC Governors' Papers*, XXI, [NCSLA]. See also, John Sevier to Andrew Jackson, May 1, 1799, in Owsley (ed.), *Jackson Papers Vol. 1*, 220-221.

⁶⁴ Journal of the House, 1798 session, 6; Journal of the House, 1799 session, 6.

⁶⁵ Report of the Committee, March 31, 1798, *Governor's Papers, Ashe*. [NCSLA]

completed its final report on June 6, 1799. After reviewing evidence, the committee provided the governor with the names of forty-seven people they believed were involved in illegally manipulating military bounty warrants. Of the forty-seven accused, the two most prominent were Stockley Donelson and William Tyrrell. On June 18, 1798 Governor Ashe wrote John Sevier, who was now the governor of Tennessee, asking him to arrest William Tyrrell and eight others. Sevier did nothing, refusing to recognize the authority of the North Carolina courts. The General Assembly created a special court of patents which would review all grants and other evidence, then determine whether or not to pursue criminal charges.⁶⁶ Governor William R. Davie, however, who only served one year from 1798-1799, concluded that a court of oyer and terminer would be an insufficient procedure for any potential trials.⁶⁷ Instead, he suggested that the Superior Courts could most effectively deal with what could end up leading to the impeachment of state officers.⁶⁸

Eleven charges were made against Secretary of State James Glasgow, in addition to some of the others accused. The report also included a list of specific instances in which the accused had acquired fraudulent grants from warrants and surveys.⁶⁹ Five of the accused men were eventually tried in June of 1800. These included James Glasgow, Willoughby Williams (who, like Stockley Donelson, was Glasgow's son-in-law and also

⁶⁶ *Laws of North Carolina*, 1798, ch.6.

⁶⁷ A court of oyer and terminer was a special court, established for a limited time in order to hear criminal cases that were urgent because of the possibility that the accused might escape, or that there were immediate ramifications that prevented a delayed proceeding. Governor William R. Davie resigned the governorship when John Adams named him brigadier general in the Army during the Quasi-War with France.

⁶⁸ *Journal of the House*, 1799 session, 6.

⁶⁹ A.B. Pruitt, *Glasgow Land Fraud Papers, 1783-1800: North Carolina Revolutionary War Bounty Land in Tennessee*. A.B. Pruitt, 1988, held in Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville [TSLA], 8.

his assistant in the Secretary's office), John Bonds, John Gray Blount, & Thomas Blount. Following the trial, Glasgow was fined £ 1,000, Willoughby Williams was fined £ 500, and John Bonds was fined £ 100. The two Blount brothers were able to get their trial postponed and moved to the court in New Bern, where they were ultimately found not guilty, though their reputations were tarnished.

The delayed prosecution did not necessarily help the Blount brothers. Thomas Blount intended to run for Congress in 1798, but his aspirations were tempered until he could restore his reputation, which had been damaged by accusations of land fraud as well as his brother's looming impeachment trial in the Senate.⁷⁰ Thomas Blount attempted to clear his name through the press, asking Solicitor Edward Jones to publish a statement in his defense, but it did not help.⁷¹ Thomas Blount never fully recovered from his involvement with the scandal. An article in the same newspaper derided him as a "landjobber" and suggested he was trying to shift blame to his brother, John Gray Blount, in order to protect his political career.⁷² Blount retaliated with claims that his critics were "Tories" and criticized the Federalist newspaper publisher, Andrew Hodge, for printing the article. He reportedly beat him with a cane.⁷³ Despite efforts at

⁷⁰ Thomas Blount to John Gray Blount, January 25, May 17, May 24, June 28, July 5, 1798, in Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*, 3:199, 210-211, 224-226, 232, 242, 245. William Blount had been involved with the "Wilkes Conspiracy" as well as plans to aiding Great Britain to annex Spanish territory. Blount was impeached and then expelled from the Senate in 1798. See Buckner F. Melton, *The First Impeachment: The Constitution's Framers and the Case of Senator William Blount* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998); Andrew R. L. Cayton, "When Shall We Cease to Have Judases? The Blount Conspiracy and the Limits of the 'Extended Republic,'" in Ronald J. Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (eds.) *Launching the "Extended Republic": The Federalist Era*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 159-189.

⁷¹ *North Carolina Journal* (Halifax), August 6, 1798.

⁷² *North Carolina Journal* (Halifax), August 6, 1798.

⁷³ Thomas Blount to John Haywood, October 18, 1797 in Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*,

salvaging his reputation, Thomas Blount was defeated in his 1798 congressional campaign, even though a majority of North Carolina voters had supported his candidacy in 1796.⁷⁴

The difficulty in prosecuting the alleged offenders in the Glasgow case further illustrates the lack of effective courts and legal institutions capable of governing the southwestern frontier. The North Carolina court system was certainly part of the problem. The legislature tried to assemble a special court to examine the case, but three different bills were rejected, in 1796, 1797, and 1798, that would have either reformed county courts, or created chancery and appeals courts. Most of the individuals accused in the fraud were living in Tennessee and refused to return to North Carolina for trials, claiming the state no longer held jurisdiction. The state ended up creating a special “conference” court that could deliver a “speedy and uniform” ruling on cases involving land disputes, but that did not satisfy everyone either.⁷⁵ With the governor’s discretion, the state Superior Court could still be asked to settle cases that were too complex for the lower courts. Hence, the governor could theoretically allow the Superior Court to hear the case.⁷⁶ Critics of the Superior Court, mainly from western counties, thought it was unfair to have judges in Raleigh decide the cases which they believed fell out of their

171-172; Thomas Blount to John Gray Blount, February 26, 1798, in Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*, 210-211. *North Carolina Journal* (Halifax), August 6, 1798.

⁷⁴ Richard Dobbs Spaight to John Gray Blount, October 18, 1798, in Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*, 3:259; For 1796 and 1798 election statistics see, “The Lampi Collection of American Electoral Returns, 1787–1825,” American Antiquarian Society, 2007 http://elections.lib.tufts.edu/aas_portal/index.xq. Blount lost to Willis Alston by 346 votes.

⁷⁵ *Journal of the House*, 1796 session, 7 (court of chancery), 8 (court of probate), 36 (county courts), 40 (court of errors and appeals); *Journal of the House*, 1797 session, 44 (county courts); *Journal of the House*, 1798 session, 65 (court of errors and appeals); *Journal of the House*, 1799 session, 17; *Journal of the Senate*, 1799 session, 57.

⁷⁶ Laws of North Carolina, 1799, ch.4.

jurisdiction.⁷⁷ North Carolina eventually made the Conference Court permanent, allowing it to hear appeals from the state Superior Court. In 1805, this became the North Carolina Supreme Court.⁷⁸

Considering the time spent investigating and prosecuting these cases, it might seem surprising that Glasgow was only charged with a misdemeanor and a levied a fine. Nevertheless, his reputation suffered and he became a useful scapegoat for Tennessee speculators. On December 19, 1799, the North Carolina legislature changed the name of Glasgow County (originally named in his honor) to Greene County in honor of General Nathaniel Greene.⁷⁹ Not surprisingly, Glasgow and his family left North Carolina soon after the trial. Glasgow settled land along the Emory River in eastern Tennessee, but ultimately moved to a plot of land near Nashville along with most of the others accused in the land conspiracy bearing his name. He died on November 17, 1819.

The Tennesseans involved in the land fraud were less harmed by their participation. Stockley Donelson, who “was as deeply involved as anyone,” ended up marrying James Glasgow’s widowed daughter and through the patronage of his new father-in-law and the Blount family, kept his position as a surveyor in Tennessee. Records indicate that his name appeared on over 150 grants. Donelson ultimately amassed over 560,000 acres in grants over the course of his time as surveyor and spent the rest of his life heavily involved in land speculation. Based on the number of recorded grants, Donelson received as much land as the entire amount dispensed during the

⁷⁷ *North Carolina Mercury* (Salisbury), December 26, 1799

⁷⁸ Pruitt, *Glasgow Land Fraud Papers*, 16. For more on the role of the Glasgow case in the establishment of the North Carolina Supreme Court, see Russell Scott Koontz, *An Angel Has Fallen* (MA Thesis: North Carolina State University, 1995).

⁷⁹ Legislative Papers, Nov-Dec, 1799, Dec. 19, in Clark (ed.), *SRNC*.

course of the Glasgow scheme.⁸⁰ Similarly, Martin Armstrong may have lost his position as head of the Nashville land office, but he retained over 100 grants and title to over 260,000 acres of land. Armstrong remained in Tennessee, where he was ultimately named Surveyor General. He never returned to North Carolina.⁸¹

Despite the dubious distinction of being the first person impeached from the United States Senate, their older brother, former territorial governor William Blount, remained influential throughout Tennessee and parts of North Carolina. John Gray and Thomas Blount retained grants of Tennessee land totaling close to 370,000 acres, and even more in North Carolina.⁸² Both were found not guilty during the 1798 trials of those accused in the Glasgow conspiracy, but hoping to preserve his reputation and secure reelection to the U.S. House of Representatives, Thomas Blount published a handbill in 1800 defending his actions, and deflecting much of the blame on his brother, John Gray. Nevertheless, Thomas Blount failed to win reelection and died in 1812.⁸³ John Gray Blount blamed rogue land agents he had hired in Tennessee for any part he may have played. The Blounts successfully avoided losing their land fortunes as a result of the Glasgow affair; but it's fair to say that their political influence and personal reputations were severely damaged.

⁸⁰ Donelson recorded two grants of 60,400 acres, 139 grants for 640 acres, and 14 for 5,000 acres. Pruitt, *Glasgow Land Fraud Papers*, 12. NCSCR, vol. 19, 690, 698, 702. See also, Samuel Cole Williams, *The Lost State of Franklin*, 306-307.

⁸¹ Powell (ed.), *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, vol. 1, 46.

⁸² During the height of the 1790's land speculation, the Blounts had grants in Buncombe County of around 1,000,000 acres, 100,000 acres in Brunswick and Carteret County, 400,000 acres in Cumberland and Moore County, 200,000 in Richmond and Robeson County, 120,000 in Jones County, 160,000 in Onslow County, 150,000 in Tyrell County, and 30,000 in Montgomery County. Figures cited in Pruitt, *Glasgow Land Fraud Papers*, 13. See also, Records of Land Grants in the NCDAH.

⁸³ Keith (ed.), *John Gray Blount Papers*, vol. 3, 600-601. See also, *Raleigh Register*, August 12, 1800.

Of the three Blount brothers mentioned (there was also a younger brother named, Reading), William Blount has the most enduringly complex legacy. Unlike most of the self-fashioned frontiersmen of early Tennessee lore - men like Jackson, Sevier, or even Sam Houston and Davy Crockett - Blount was a proud “metropolitan.” He liked to boast of his genealogy going back to William the Conqueror, and fought with Royal Governor William Tryon’s army against the North Carolina Regulators during the Battle of Alamance in 1771. He was in no way an archetype of the rugged frontiersman like Sevier or Jackson. Nevertheless, when the Colonies began a war for independence, the opportunistic Blount joined the cause and enlisted in the Continental Army. His loyalty, of course, was always based on self-interest, as evident in his plot while territorial governor to conspire with Creek Indians and British officers to seize Spanish territory in West Florida. This action led to his impeachment and expulsion from the United States Senate in 1798.⁸⁴

Despite a relatively troubling past that diverged from many of America’s founders, William Blount was an important force in the political and cultural evolution of eastern Tennessee. In addition to being a land speculator, territorial governor, and senator, William Blount helped establish the city of Knoxville and chartered Blount College (which became the University of Tennessee) in 1794. But his most enduring legacy was probably his patronage of a young Nashville lawyer named Andrew Jackson,

⁸⁴ Blount’s impeachment and expulsion brought up an important constitutional question; how does the Senate prosecute one of its own members? As Vice President, Thomas Jefferson presided over the Senate and raised this concern. Two months after his removal, the Senate dismissed the charges against Blount, determining that they had no jurisdiction over its members other than constitutional right of expulsion after a two-thirds majority vote. By the time his charges were dismissed, Blount had already been elected to serve as a senator and Speaker in the Tennessee state legislature. See, Melton, Buckner Jr., *The First Impeachment: The Constitution's Framers and the Case of Senator William Blount*, (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998).

in whom Blount saw a useful partner in perpetuating his land speculation. Blount helped Jackson by giving him his first legal appointment after moving to Nashville, naming him chief attorney for the Mero District.⁸⁵ The Blount family patronage remained important for Jackson's career even after their reputations were tarnished. Without Blount's support, it's unlikely that Andrew Jackson would have risen so quickly and significantly in frontier politics. Tennessee's political center at that time was in the East, but Blount was perpetually focused on acquiring new land in the West. He used his influential connections from the Muscle Shoals Company to create a friendly and loyal group of supporters in middle and western Tennessee that could help him continue his speculative interests. Historian Kristopher Ray's study of early Tennessee history makes the case that Jackson and other "aspiring young lawyers" represented a new generation of frontier political leadership that benefited from their loyalty to William Blount.⁸⁶ In this way, William Blount used men like Andrew Jackson to create a critical bridge between the whiggish metropolitanism that dominated the revolutionary era and the provincial democratic ethos that emerged in the early nineteenth-century. Jackson's loyalty to William Blount persisted throughout the Glasgow scandal and his impeachment from the Senate in 1799.

When Andrew Jackson exposed the Glasgow Land Fraud, it may have seemed as though he was simply doing his job as an attorney and dutiful Congressman. After all, he once wrote that he could not imagine how one would "knowingly promulgate a

⁸⁵ Historian H.W. Brands argues that Blount was the ideal patron for the young Andrew Jackson, saying, "a more promising mentor would have been hard to imagine." H.W. Brands, *Andrew Jackson: His Life and Times*, (New York: Anchor, 2006), 67. See also, Appointment as Mero District Attorney for the Southwest Territory, February 15, 1791, in Owsley (ed.), *Jackson Papers Vol. 1*, 26.

⁸⁶ Ray, *Middle Tennessee*, 42.

falsehood against any man to raise himself to the highest pitch of official dignity.”⁸⁷ What he uncovered was not that unusual or alarming, but it happened during a time of great transition. Federalists were losing their grip on power and people were increasingly focused on western expansion. By casting himself as an arbiter of justice in exposing fraud, Jackson thought he might earn some governing credibility. It also allowed him to construct an image of himself as a defender of settler interests and proverbial “man of the people.” This was a public image that Jackson effectively exploited throughout his career.

The fact that a young Andrew Jackson exposed the Glasgow scandal is not coincidental. Jackson was a shrewdly ambitious newcomer in Tennessee politics who developed a bitter rivalry with John Sevier. Jackson saw this as an opportunity to weaken Sevier’s status and credibility in order to advance his own career. It’s not clear how concerned Jackson was about the manipulative schemes being orchestrated by James Glasgow and carried out through Martin Armstrong’s land office. After all, Jackson had engaged in his own land speculation. But the ambitious young lawyer, judge, and politician from Nashville was definitely interested in challenging the political power of the eastern Tennessee elite, especially the popular Revolutionary War hero and governor John Sevier. Jackson publicly accused Sevier of being involved in land fraud and other suspect activity, but despite plenty of supporting evidence, could never get formal charges levied against him.⁸⁸ The main evidence Jackson used against Sevier were allegations that he had destroyed some of the records showing he was the recipient

⁸⁷ Andrew Jackson to Benjamin Bradford, July 19, 1803, in Owsley (ed.), *Jackson Papers Vol. 1*, 337-338.

⁸⁸ Jackson accused Sevier of forging at least 165 warrants for 640 acres each. He also claimed that a payment to Glasgow of three 640 acre tracts was in fact a bribe of \$960 for performing illegal services. Robert E. Corlew, *Tennessee: A Short History* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 134.

of fraudulent grants. Thus Jackson's accusations were primarily based on, as he said, "my own memory" from looking at records in John Carter's land office.⁸⁹

In their correspondence, Sevier acknowledged that he sent "blank commissions for the Cavalry officers of Mero district to General Robertson," but that he believed he was "within the line of my duty." What angered Sevier was Jackson's attacks on his "public character." He pleaded to Jackson that "the great object of my political life has been to promote the welfare of this part of the western country; now the state of Tennessee. How far I have succeeded is not for me to determine." Sevier was very troubled by the extent to which Jackson might tarnish his legacy among Tennessee settlers as well as his own posterity.⁹⁰ Fortunately for Sevier, he would survive the attacks, while Jackson would learn a valuable lesson about what settlers valued in their leaders. He would learn from this experience and refashion his public image in a way that resonated with frontier settlers.

The feud between Jackson and Sevier began in 1796 when an overconfident and boisterous Jackson, a relative newcomer to Tennessee, dared to challenge Sevier for election as Major General of the state militia. Military victory at King's Mountain had helped elevate Sevier's political popularity, and that, above all else, was what Jackson coveted. For it was through military triumph that he could convince settlers and speculators that he was the leader most capable of securing their land. Jackson and Sevier faced each other in an election for Major General of the Tennessee militia in February 1802. The vote resulted in a tie, which meant Sevier's successor as governor, Archibald Roane, would cast the deciding vote for Jackson. Sevier began insulting

⁸⁹ Andrew Jackson to Benjamin Bradford, July 19, 1803, in Owsley (ed.), *Jackson Papers Vol. 1*, 337-338.

⁹⁰ John Sevier to Andrew Jackson, May 8, 1797, in Owsley (ed.), *Jackson Papers Vol. 1*, 137-138.

Roane in public, so the governor published the evidence of Sevier's role in the Glasgow land fraud in the *Knoxville Gazette* on July 27, 1803.⁹¹ Knoxville was Sevier's home and these allegations represented an aggressive political attack.⁹² Roane relied on the evidence Jackson had uncovered to publish these accusations.

According to historian A.V. Goodpasture, it was Jackson's implication of Sevier in the Glasgow scheme that precipitated an exchange of words that ultimately led them to arrange a duel.⁹³ Jackson reiterated his accusations that Sevier had been involved in a massive land fraud scheme, while Sevier had the audacity to question the legitimacy of Jackson's marriage to Rachel Donelson. Sevier's comments came after a chance encounter on the streets of Knoxville on October 1, 1803. Sevier challenged Jackson's motives in accusing Sevier of being involved in land fraud. Jackson responded that he had faithfully served the people of Tennessee as a judge and delegate to Congress. Sevier mocked his supposed service, allegedly saying "I know of no great service you have rendered the country except taking a trip to Natchez with another man's wife."⁹⁴ Jackson was notoriously defensive of his wife, and particularly sensitive about the allegations of bigamy. Sevier had crossed a line. An "affair of honor" seemed inevitable. Jackson requested an "interview" with Sevier - that is, a duel - after saying he was "of a base mind goaded with stubborn proofs of fraud, and flowing from a source devoid of every refined sentiment." Sevier responded by referring to Jackson's "ungentlemanly

⁹¹ *Knoxville Gazette*, July 27, 1803. (Knoxville: East Tennessee Historical Society). Outside of political and speculating circles, the fraud was not widely discussed until Jackson exposed it soon after this altercation.

⁹² Sevier defended his actions in the same paper on August 8, saying that Jackson was politically motivated and there was not evidence that he had committed fraud. *Knoxville Gazette*, August 8, 1803.

⁹³ A.V. Goodpasture, "The Genesis of Jackson-Sevier Feud," *American Historical Magazine*, No. 5, 1900, 115-123. See also, Owsley (ed.), *Jackson Papers Vol. 1*, 346 n5.

⁹⁴ This is the account as told by Robert Remini, *Andrew Jackson* (New York: Harper, 1999), 121-124 and John Buchanan, *Jackson's Way: Andrew Jackson and the People of the Western Waters*, (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2001), 167.

and gasconading conduct.”⁹⁵ The two met near Knoxville in 1803 but did not exchange fire, nor did they ever fully reconcile their differences.⁹⁶ Andrew Jackson was 36 years old at the time of the duel and was just beginning his ascent in Tennessee politics. John Sevier was 58, and although he was a heroic icon of the revolutionary generation and would continue serving throughout his life, Jackson represented the future of Tennessee politics. Beyond Tennessee, Jackson became the progenitor of a democratic populism that has permeated American politics ever since his meteoric rise.

Robert Remini describes the transitional moment that occurred during the ten years following Jackson’s arrival in Tennessee. By 1798, he writes, “civilized society had arrived, and the frontier was moving on.”⁹⁷ Andrew Jackson came to Tennessee during a time when private speculating companies were competing with North Carolina for jurisdiction over western land, particularly around the Cumberland River. Both sides saw themselves as legitimate promoters of American colonization. The reason for so much jurisdictional confusion was the absence of an effective governing body to manage land grants and provide security to settlers. Those living in the West would submit to whichever authority could best protect their interests. Challenging John Sevier’s political prestige and power by associating him with land fraud helped Jackson frame himself as the type of leader that settlers had long demanded and speculators thought they could work with. Of course, it took time for this to become manifest. Despite Jackson’s efforts, Sevier remained popular in eastern Tennessee and subsequently won

⁹⁵ Owsley (ed.), *Jackson Papers Vol. 1*, 367-368.

⁹⁶ The duel occurred in Knoxville at Jackson’s request because that was where Sevier had allegedly insulted his wife Rachel. Jackson wrote, “your attack was in the town of Knoxville, in the town of Knoxville did you take the name of a lady into your polluted lips in the town of Knoxville did you challenge me to draw...and now sir in the neighborhood of Knoxville you shall atone for it or I will publish you as a coward and a patroon.” Owsley (ed.), *Jackson Papers Vol. 1*, 369.

⁹⁷ Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of Empire, 1767-1821, Vol. 1*, 117.

reelection as governor in 1803, despite Jackson's attacks and their near fateful encounter. In fact, people in east Tennessee were furious at Jackson for daring to challenge their beloved John Sevier.⁹⁸ But Jackson's boisterous challenging of such a popular political figure made him known throughout the state as a force to be reckoned with. Whether or not Jackson's attacks weakened Sevier, they certainly elevated his own political stature. In this way, Jackson's audacious accusation against the "hero of King's Mountain" signaled the beginning of his influential rise in frontier and national politics. By engaging Sevier so publicly, Jackson gained the attention of ordinary Tennesseans, in the same way he had done with his patron William Blount. When the accusations of fraud did not hurt Sevier's reputation, he discovered something about settler expectations of leadership. He learned that the path to power in the southwestern frontier was through projecting strength and bravado, combined with the legal acumen to potentially sustain an effective government.

As the Federalists gradually lost their influence after 1800, the center of American power shifted to the west and became embodied by men like Jackson from Tennessee, or Henry Clay from Kentucky. A way for Jackson to enter national politics seemed to be emerging. The periphery was becoming the center. Jefferson's election to the presidency represented a shift in popular political sentiment and Jackson thought he had a natural ally. After the Louisiana Purchase, Jackson wrote to Jefferson offering "the unanimous congratulations of the citizens of Mero, on the joyful event of the cession...every face wears a smile, and every heart leaps with joy."⁹⁹ Jackson's true

⁹⁸ Patricia Brady, *A Being So Gentle: The Frontier Love Story of Rachel and Andrew Jackson*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011), 79-80.

⁹⁹ "Andrew Jackson to Thomas Jefferson, August 7, 1803," in Owsley (ed.), *Jackson Papers*, Vol. 1, 354.

motive, however, was seeking a military or governing post in the new territory. If military glory had secured Sevier's reputation even after allegations of fraud, perhaps Jackson could become similarly beloved by the people of Tennessee and the southwestern frontier. Jefferson did not give Jackson the appointment he sought, for which he remained resentful, even though he continued to admire his political philosophies.

During this time, Jackson also became involved with Aaron Burr's plan to muster an unauthorized military expedition against the Spanish in Louisiana. Burr launched his audacious venture into new territory after being ostracized in national politics for killing Alexander Hamilton in 1804. According to one historian, Burr's reputation in the West was not harmed by killing Hamilton, who was viewed as an "eastern elitist...and arrogant power broker."¹⁰⁰ He thought he could win support for his scheme among western settlers who had a long history of pursuing separatist polities or colonies of their own, or even making overtures to Spain during the waning days of the state of Franklin. Burr sought Jackson's assistance in his colonization scheme. Although he was implicated by some of his critics, Jackson never fully supported Burr's plan, but nor did he fully condemn the potentially treasonous activities. This pleased Jackson's old patron William Blount, a prominent Burr ally. After all, the two shared a common experience of falling from the good graces of national political prominence. Jackson, Burr, and Blount saw the future of American politics in the West. But only one of them would emerge as a national political figure.

¹⁰⁰ Andrew Burstein, *The Passions of Andrew Jackson*, 69.

While Jackson continued building his credentials as a militia officer in various southwestern Indian wars, he finally got an opportunity to ascend to national prominence when the governor of Tennessee was asked to appoint the commander of 1,500 volunteer soldiers in a campaign to New Orleans during the War of 1812. Robert Remini makes the case that the two most important moments in Jackson's military career were his election as major general of the militia and his appointment to lead troops to New Orleans in the War of 1812.¹⁰¹ Both of these pivotal moments happened when Sevier was out of power and out of the state.

John Sevier had just ended his last term as governor in 1809 and was elected to serve in the Senate. During this time, Jackson had also befriended Sevier's old Franklin foe, John Tipton, which earned him the support of that faction of Tennessee settlers.¹⁰² Jackson was finding a way to transcend Sevier's influence in Tennessee politics. Winning the support of former "Tiptonites" and relying on the patronage of the Blount family offered the best way to do that. If he had still been governor, Sevier would certainly not have appointed Jackson to lead the militia after their long standing feud. Fortunately for Jackson, William Blount's younger brother, "Willie" Blount was now governor of Tennessee, and was happy to appoint Jackson to command the Tennessee troops at New Orleans.¹⁰³ It was the Battle of New Orleans, of course, that most historians suggest launched Jackson's national political career. It was his experience navigating the channels of power in the frontier, making friends with people like Blount,

¹⁰¹ Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of Empire, 1767-1821, Vol. 1*, 124.

¹⁰² Remini, *Andrew Jackson and the Course of Empire, 1767-1821, Vol. 1*, 160.

¹⁰³ Willie Blount was William Blount's younger half-brother. He served as governor of Tennessee from 1809-1815. Willie defeated one of John Sevier's political allies, William Cocke, in the election of 1809, which helped usher in a new era of Tennessee politics in which the influence of east Tennessee politicians began to wane in favor of men from the Cumberland region.

and enemies with people like Sevier, that put Jackson in a position to reach a larger stage and therefore change the national political culture. For example, duels only occurred between relative equals. By engaging with Jackson in an “affair of honor,” Sevier legitimized Jackson’s standing among Tennessee settlers. Sevier could have dismissed him as an inconsequential and opportunistic judge from Cumberland, but the public encounter with the popular John Sevier made Jackson known across the state.¹⁰⁴

The feud between John Sevier and Andrew Jackson was one of the defining events in early Tennessee history. Jackson was notoriously defensive to any public criticism, so it is not surprising that he would be so easily lured into a potential duel. Although Sevier resented Jackson for daring to challenge him in the election for Major General of the state militia, it was Jackson who initially confronted Sevier, questioning his integrity by suggesting he had engaged in land fraud. The contentious exchange of letters that followed resulted in Jackson’s threat, in 1803, to publicly expose Sevier’s complicity in land fraud. Up until then, the Glasgow scheme had not gained much attention in Tennessee, even though it had been a hotly contested political issue in North Carolina since it was exposed in 1797. Without Jackson’s accusations and threats to publish them in the *Knoxville Gazette*, there would have never been the heated exchange in which Sevier insulted Jackson’s beloved wife, Rachel. The potential duel elevated Jackson’s stature in Tennessee, even if it was initially negative. The fact that the accusations did not hurt Sevier’s reputation taught Jackson an important lesson about

¹⁰⁴ For more on the culture of dueling see, Joanne Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). For more on the importance of “honor” in southern culture, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

settlers' expectations of leadership. Sevier presented himself as a man of the people, and Jackson would subsequently do the same.

Jackson became the embodiment of what the American Revolution unleashed as settlers sought to secure land titles and their rights as patriotic citizens by turning to powerful private patrons who could negotiate advantageous terms of union with their fellow Americans. On the southwestern frontier, colonial governments failed to do this, as did early state governments. Private speculators made efforts as well, but could never maintain legitimate jurisdictions and thus lacked the capacity to secure settlers' claims. What was needed was a new type of politics that could fulfill the ambitions of both speculators and settlers. The frontier enabled the creation of that political dynamic.

By 1824, the center of American political power had moved from the established eastern cities to the formerly peripheral frontier. Most historians agree that Jackson's popular vote victory in that year's presidential election was an indication of this new political reality, inaugurating the "Jacksonian era." Andrew Jackson is a fascinating historical figure, and the history of the early American frontier is full of great storylines. Even more interesting is how the colonial frontier became the progenitor of American democracy.

Episodes like the Glasgow fraud reveal the ways in which territorial expansion created a venue for opportunistic provincials to become major players in a new American republic. On one level, the Glasgow case was just another sordid example of speculators acting in their own self-interests. But it also helped launch the career of Andrew Jackson and his brand of frontier populism. When Jackson became a whistleblower and informed North Carolina governor Samuel Ashe of fraudulent activity in the Nashville land office, it put in motion a series of events that would transform American

political culture. What he could not have realized at the time was that he would come to represent the personal embodiment of a transformation that would bear his name.

Securing American independence meant securing access to land and a process for legal and orderly expansion of the new federal union. This required a new generation of leadership. It required people who understood the complexities of western land and could win the support of settlers. Private speculators were the first to recognize this, but failed to establish successful western colonies. Andrew Jackson's exposure of the Glasgow scheme enabled him, and his brand of leadership, to reshape American politics in the early nineteenth-century.

List of Grants Included in the Glasgow Land Fraud*	
James Adams	1,280 acres
Redmond D. Barry	11,000 acres
Gee Bradley	3,800 acres
Sterling Brewer	3,000 acres
John Bonds	3,400 acres
Joshua Davis	12,400 acres
Wynn Dixon	2,560 acres
Stockely Donelson	562,000 acres
James Eason	12,800 acres
William Faircloth	2,200 acres
Joshua Hadley	24,200 acres
John Jones	7,800 acres
William Lytle	16,000 acres
John Medeaes	1,280 acres
Robert McConnel	6,400 acres
John McNeas	15,100 acres
John Nelson	22,000 acres
Mann Phillips	5,000 acres
Benjamin Sheppard	20,000 acres
Samuel Samford	12,800 acres
John Sheppard	22, 600 acres
Abraham Swaggarthy	9,600 acres
John Tipper	228 acres
William Tyrell	14,000 acres
Willoughby Williams	15,000 acres
John Wright	1,500 acres

**These are a list of individuals who received grants as part of the Glasgow land fraud.*

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