

The State of Franklin

by Eliane Dotson
Old World Auctions

One of the most fascinating aspects of maps is that beyond geography, they are capable of communicating the political, economic, and social events of history. Even events that lasted for a mere nanosecond in the history of time have been preserved on maps. One such brief event was the **State of Franklin**, which almost became the 14th state of the fledgling United States. While the State of Franklin was only in existence for about 4 years, it continued to appear on maps for nearly 50 years after its dissolution.

History of the State of Franklin

The creation of the State of Franklin occurred during an interesting series of cessions and secessions with North Carolina. At the conclusion of the American Revolution, North Carolina, as well as its neighboring states, stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. The new government and the individual states were saddled with debt due to the war. In order to help pay some of its debt, the North Carolina legislature introduced the "Land Grab Act" on April 26, 1783, which allowed citizens to purchase land west of the Appalachian Mountains for 10 pounds per 100 acres. Four million acres were granted in a seven-month period, most of which were sold to members of the legislature and their business partners, who had advance knowledge of the land grab. The "Land Grab Act" encouraged settlement in the western portion of the state, and thousands of citizens moved westward, despite the presence of and continued skirmishes with Native American Indians.

Despite the profits from the Land Grab, North Carolina still owed money to the national government. Recognizing the challenge in protecting and governing the western portion of the state, North Carolina legislator William Blount sponsored a bill in June 1784 to cede all the lands west of the Appalachians to the Continental Congress to satisfy the state's debts. In order to protect the legislature's and their partners' land investments, the bill included the stipulation that all land grants must be upheld.

In the meantime, the settlers in the eastern portion of what is now Tennessee saw an opportunity. The settlers were frustrated with the lack of protection the North Carolina government was able to provide in the face of constant attacks from Native Indians. They also disagreed with the levels of taxation that were imposed upon them by their state. Prompted by North Carolina's decision to cede its western lands, and the apparent congressional desire to create new states, the settlers came together to declare their lands independent of North Carolina. On August 23, 1784 delegates from the counties of Washington, Sullivan, Spencer and Greene met in Jonesborough to elect leaders and draft a constitution. John Sevier, a Virginian of French descent, was elected governor. Sevier, who had served as a colonel in the Battle of Kings Mountain in 1780 and was a resident of Washington County, played a pivotal role in the State of Franklin and the eventual creation of Tennessee.

By October 1784, it became apparent that Congress would not accept North Carolina's terms for the cession of its western frontier. A newly elected North Carolina legislature repealed the cession bill and was determined to re-assert its claims on the western counties, particularly in light of the recent rumblings for independence. However the

frontiersmen were undeterred, and on May 16, 1785 they sent a delegation to Congress to submit a petition for statehood for "Frankland." Although seven states voted to admit "Frankland" as the 14th state, this was less than the 2/3 majority required under the Articles of Confederation to admit a new state.

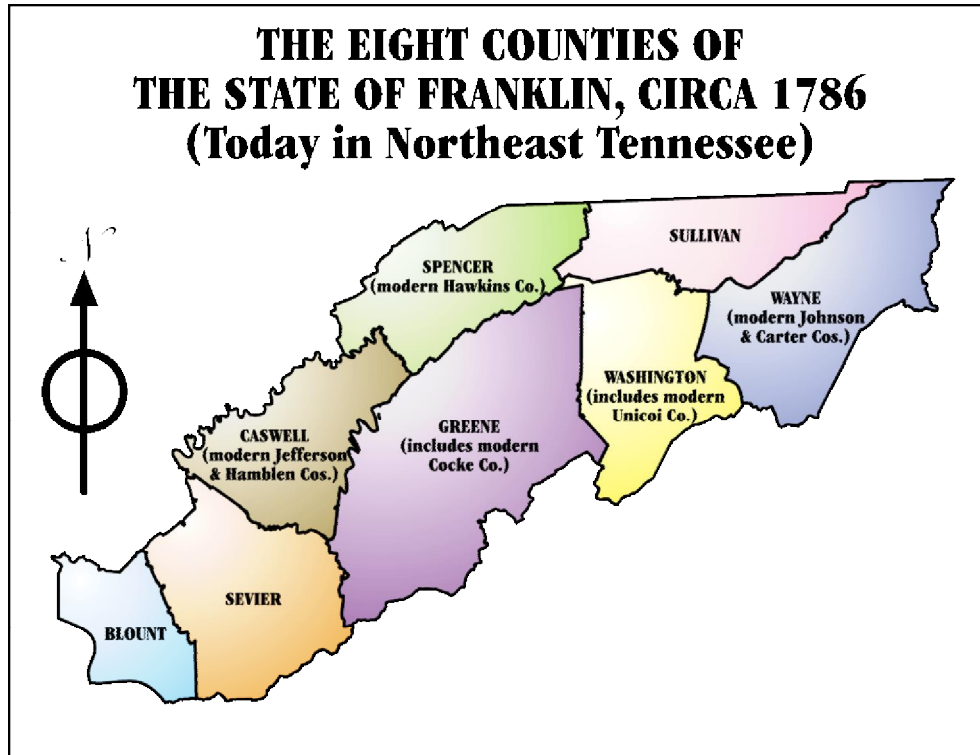


Image Courtesy of: By lamvered (I, lamvered, drew this map myself.) [GFDL (www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html) or CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

During the latter half of 1785, the frontiersmen regrouped and made several important changes. The delegation officially changed the name to "Franklin" in the hope of gaining favor for their cause by attempting to associate themselves with Benjamin Franklin. John Sevier even wrote a letter to Benjamin Franklin to seek his support, but Franklin declined to become involved, advising instead that the Franklinites work towards an amicable settlement with North Carolina. The Franklinites moved their capital to Greenville and held the first meeting of their legislature in December 1785. During the meeting they adopted a constitution that resembled closely the constitution of North Carolina, which became known as the *Holston Constitution*. They also created a court system, annexed five new counties (including Sevier County), and encouraged bartering as the economic system. The legislature developed a system of taxation and gave citizens a two-year reprieve on paying taxes in order to prevent further hardship on the frontiersmen. Due to the focus on bartering and a lack of tax funds, the fledgling state was unable to develop economic growth during a time when it was needed most. Having declared its independence from North Carolina, yet being denied statehood by the Confederation, the State of Franklin began operating as a *de facto* independent republic.

Rather than concentrating on economic growth, Franklin focused on territorial expansion. Of course the majority of the lands immediately outside of Franklin's

boundaries were inhabited by Native Indians, primarily from the Cherokee and Chickasaw tribes. Back and forth raids and frequent battles were common between the frontiersmen and the Native Indians, known as the Cherokee-American Wars. In June of 1785, the State of Franklin secured the Treaty of Dumplin Creek with the Cherokee, establishing a boundary between Franklin and the Cherokee in the hopes of reducing tensions. Less than six months later, the Federal government stepped in and renegotiated the boundary line with the Cherokee nation through the Treaty of Hopewell, resulting in numerous Franklinites suddenly finding themselves in Cherokee territory. The Franklinites again negotiated a new Treaty with the Cherokee in August 1786, known as the Treaty of Coyatee, in order to secure the lands upon which Franklinites had already settled.

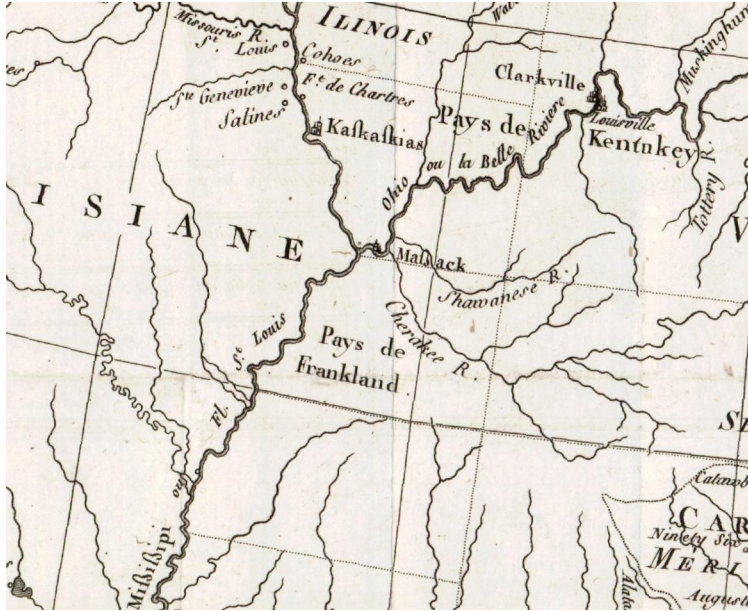
Relations between the Cherokee and the frontiersmen did not improve, and the Franklinites were forced to protect their citizens on their own, without the help of the North Carolina militia or the federal army. Facing limited resources and North Carolina's renewed interest in Franklin, some residents began shifting their allegiance to North Carolina. In 1786 the North Carolina legislature took advantage of the situation and offered to waive all back taxes owed by the State of Franklin in exchange for reuniting with North Carolina. However dissenters within Franklin were still few, and the offer was largely rejected by the Franklinites. Since Franklin could not be convinced to rejoin, North Carolina decided to force the territory back under rule. North Carolina sent troops under Colonel John Tipton to Franklin and established its own courts, jails and government, causing much confusion with two rival administrations operating simultaneously. In addition, North Carolina began to assess Franklinites taxes, which, considering their lack of hard currency and preference for bartering, they were not able to pay.

In February 1788, Colonel Tipton ordered the North Carolina sheriff of Washington County to seize the property of John Sevier in order to satisfy his tax debt. The property was seized while Sevier was not home, and was taken to Tipton's cabin in Johnson City. Upon hearing of the seizure, Sevier gathered loyal Franklinites to march upon Colonel Tipton's cabin and initiated what became known as the Battle of Franklin. The battle, lasting only a matter of minutes, resulted in three deaths, a few wounded men, and a decisive defeat for John Sevier, who retreated back to Jonesborough with his men.

In March 1788, tensions with Native Indians also climaxed as the Cherokee banded with the Chickasaw and other tribes to attack settlements in Franklin. Operating as an independent state, John Sevier knew he could not count on the federal government or North Carolina for assistance. In a desperate attempt to secure sufficient resources to protect Franklin, Sevier requested a loan from the Spanish government. Fearing that Spain would gain control of Franklin, North Carolina officials arrested Sevier in August 1788 to prevent him from striking a deal with Spain. Sevier's supporters sprung him from jail soon thereafter, but the deal with Spain was no longer pursued.

Finally in February 1789, John Sevier and his fellow Franklin officials turned themselves in and swore their allegiance to North Carolina. They were rewarded with assistance from the North Carolina militia in fighting the Cherokee and Chickasaw in their counties. Sevier was pardoned by the governor of North Carolina and soon thereafter was elected to the North Carolina state senate.

As the conflict with Franklin ended, North Carolina was again at liberty to cede the western portion of the state to the federal government in late 1789. The territory became known as the "Territory South of the River Ohio" or the Southwest Territory. On June 1, 1796, the territory officially became the state of Tennessee, and John Sevier was elected as the first state governor.



Carte Generale des Etats-Unis de l'Amerique Septentrionale. Tardieu's map of the United States shows "Pays de Frankland" just east of the Mississippi River.

Mapping the State of Franklin

The State of Franklin was never officially recognized by North Carolina or the federal government, however it began to appear on maps as early as 1787. The first engraved map on which Franklin is known to appear is Pierre Tardieu's "Carte Generale des Etats-Unis de l'Amerique Septentrionale," published in Michel Guillaume de Crèvecoeur's classic collection of essays reflecting the nature of American life. *Pays de Frankland* is labeled just east of the Mississippi River in present-day western Tennessee, although not delineated. Over the next 40 years, *Frankland*, *Franklin* or *Franklinia* appeared on over 25 maps (that have been so far identified), which represents a tiny fraction of the number of maps of the US Southeast that were published during that time period. Many people will recall Ashley Baynton-Williams' excellent article, "Maps Marking the American State of Franklin," published in *The Map Collector*, Issue 72, Autumn 1995, which listed 17 engraved maps depicting Franklin. Of course at the end of his article he wisely noted that "there must be a number of maps that I have not encountered," and despite the addition of 10 maps to his original list, that certainly remains the case.

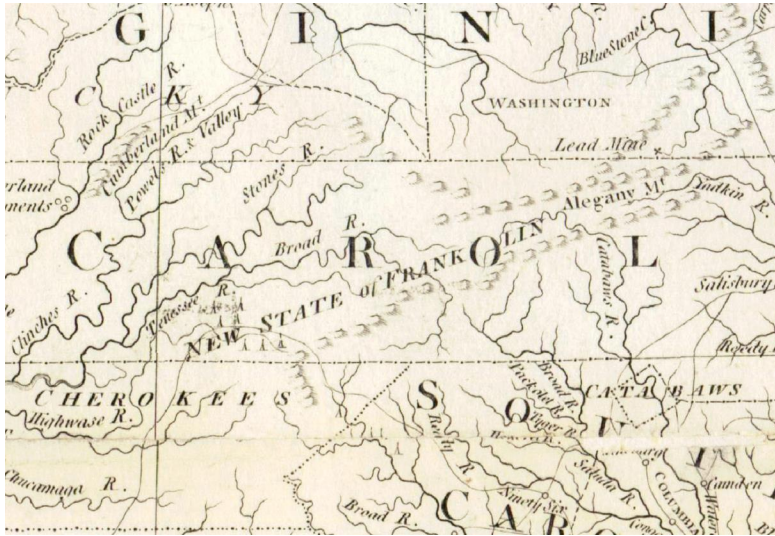
Below is the most comprehensive list to date of the State of Franklin appearing on engraved maps. It is interesting to note that the nomenclature on the maps transitioned over time from *Frankland*, to *Franklin*, to *Franklinia*. On most maps, it is simply the nomenclature related to Franklin that appears, however on several maps the state is actually delineated. Only one map, Tardieu's map of 1787, depicts Franklin adjacent to the Mississippi River in present-day western Tennessee. The majority of the maps depict Franklin properly in eastern Tennessee, along the Appalachian Mountains. Five maps, including one French map and four (of five total) German maps, depict Franklin

too far north nestled between Virginia and Kentucky, which had gained statehood in 1792, several years after the dissolution of Franklin. The list below identifies the title, creator, and first issue date for each of the engraved maps. We have also created a thorough PDF carto-bibliography of these maps, including images for most of the maps, the nomenclature and location of Franklin on each map, map size, references, and identification of various states for each map. Please click here (http://www.oldworldauctions.com/newsletter_archive/State%20of%20Franklin%20Maps.pdf) for the PDF carto-bibliography. We will continue to update the PDF carto-bibliography as new information arises regarding additional maps, different states or other details.

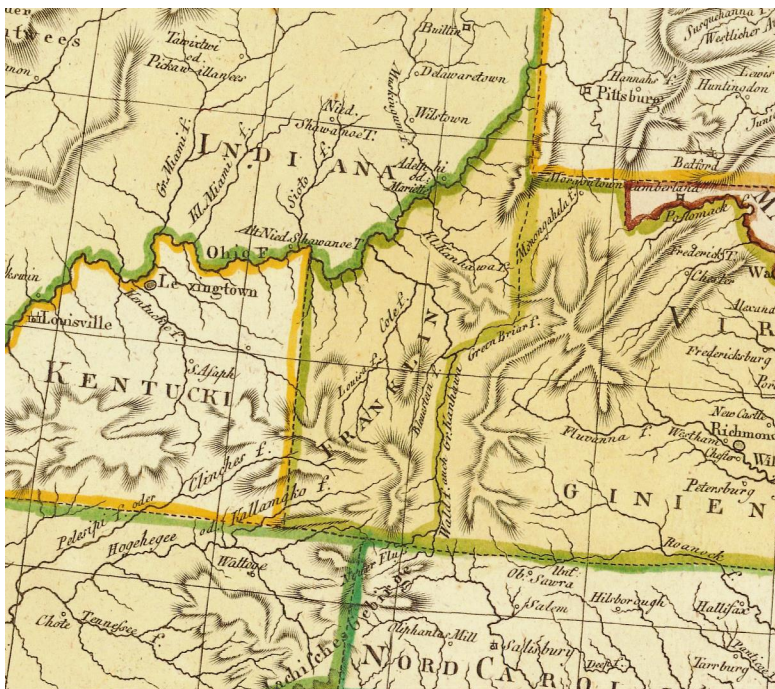
List of Maps

- 1) **1787:** Pierre Francois Tardieu, *Carte Generale des Etats-Unis de l'Amerique Septentrionale....*
- 2) **1788:** Joseph Purcell, *A Map of the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia....*
- 3) **1788:** Louis Brion de la Tour, *Carte des Etats-Unis d'Amerique et du Cours du Mississipi....*
- 4) **1791:** John Payne, *The United States of America.*
- 5) **1792:** Joseph Purcell / William Harrison, *A Map of the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia....*
- 6) **1792:** Joseph Purcell / John Taylor, *A Map of the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia....*
- 7) **1793:** William Faden, *The United States of North America: with the British Territories and Those of Spain, according to the Treaty of 1784.*
- 8) **1794:** Aaron Arrowsmith, *Map of the World on a Globular Projection Exhibiting Particularly the Nautical Researches of Capn. James Cook....*
- 9) **1795:** John Fairburn, *A Map of North America.*
- 10) **1797:** Franz Ludwig Gussefeld, *Charte von Nordamerika nach Astronomischen Bestimmungen und den Neuesten Charten von Dalrymple.*
- 11) **1798:** John Fairburn, *North America with the West India Islands.*
- 12) **1799:** Francois Alexander Rochefoucauld Liancourt, *Map of the United States, Canada &c, intended to illustrate the Travels of the Duke de la Rochefoucauld Liancourt.*
- 13) **1800:** Joseph Purcell / Vint & Anderson, *A Map of the States of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia....*
- 14) **1800:** Franz Ludwig Gussefeld, *Charte der XV Vereinigten Staaten von Nord-America....*
- 15) **1800:** Anonymous, *Die Vereinigten Staaten und die Besitzungen d Englander von Nordamerika, XVI.*
- 16) **1800:** Anonymous, *Etats-Unis et Possessions Anglaises de l'Amerique Septentrionale.*
- 17) **1801:** Smith & Jones, *Map of the United States, Canada the River St. Lawrence, the Lakes &c.*
- 18) **1804:** Christian Gottlieb Theophil Reichard, *Charte von Nordamerika nach den neuesten Bestimmungen und Entdeckungen.*
- 19) **1804:** Robert Wilkinson, *North America.*
- 20) **1804:** Edward Patteson, *United States of America.*
- 21) **1805:** J. Stansbury, *America.*
- 22) **1806:** Robert Wilkinson, *The United States of America Confirmed by Treaty. 1783.*
- 23) **1807:** Johann Walch, *Charte von Nordamerika nach den neuesten Entdeckungen und Zuverlassigsten Astronomischen Ortsbestimmungen Entworfen.*

- 24) 1811: R. Gray, *North America from the Most Authentic and Latest Surveys.*
- 25) 1819: James Wyld, *United States.*
- 26) 1826: Jehoshaphat Aspin, *North & South America; For the Elucidation of the Abbe Gaultier's Geographical Games.*
- 27) 1838: Fisher & Sons, *States of America.*



Engraved by William Harrison and published by John Stockdale in 1792, this edition of Purcell's map depicts the "New State of Franklin" in present-day eastern Tennessee.



Dated 1800, this is Gussefeld's second map depicting "Franklin," which is oddly shown too far north tucked between Kentucky and Virginia. In his previous map from 1797, Franklin is correctly depicted in eastern Tennessee.



Wilkinson published two maps showing "Franklinia" -- one of North America (1804) and another of the United States (1806). This close-up of his map of the United States depicts Franklinia with full boundaries.



Aspin's map of North and South America is one of the last published maps to depict "Franklinia." This image is from an undated example that was published circa 1832.

References:

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