Six Pioneer Accounts of Life on the Old North-West American Frontier, 1790-1850

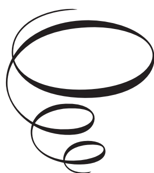
Six Pioneer Accounts of Life on the Old North-West American Frontier, 1790-1850

A Critical Reading

By

Franklin E. Court

Cambridge Scholars
Publishing



Six Pioneer Accounts of Life on the Old North-West American Frontier, 1790-1850: A Critical Reading

By Franklin E. Court

This book first published 2022

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2022 by Franklin E. Court

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-8322-8
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-8322-1

"Those who now go to the Far West can look forward to a rapid improvement. They can have but little idea of the discouragements young adventurers of that Country must have encountered. Nothing but a most indomitable perseverance could have caused them to remain, and I have felt like attributing to them a higher commendation than has yet been accorded to such."
—Mrs. Christiana Holmes Tillson, in 1871, in a conversation with her daughter, recalling her days as a young bride in the 1820s on the Old North-West frontier in Southern Illinois in *Reminiscences of Early Life in Illinois, by Our Mother* (Privately Published by the Tillson Family, 1872-73)

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations ix

Acknowledgments x

Introduction 1

Chapter 1 6
Mr. Hugh Henry Brackenridge: *Incidents of the Insurrection in Western... Pennsylvania...in 1794* and Early American Sectionalism
Introduction—The Conflict Unfolds: July 1794—Brackenridge's Narrative—Brackenridge Ponders His Future—"Tom the Tinker," Parkinson's Ferry Conference Committee—Conference Committee Meetings—The Threat of Western Pennsylvania Seceding from the Union, August 1794—War or No War and "A Moment of Delicacy"—Brackenridge's Hasty Escape—Final Thoughts.

Chapter 2 44
Mrs. Christiana Holmes Tillson: *A Woman's Story of Pioneer Illinois*, the "Yankees" and the "White Folks" in the 1820s
Introduction—Mrs. Tillson's Narrative Begins—Mr. Tillson Takes a Wife, the Fearful Journey West—The "Fiend" Mr. Brice Hanna—Illinois Winter 1822; Sarcasm and Heavy Southern Biscuits—The Log House and "Visiting" Neighbors—Sickness, Travel, Caleb and Lucy, the Complexities of Slavery in the 1820s—The Last Fourteen Pages—A Final Talking Point.

Chapter 3 82
Mr. Daniel Harmon Brush: *Growing Up with Southern Illinois* and the Pursuit of an "American Way of Life," 1820 to 1861
Introduction—Mr. Daniel Harmon Brush's Narrative Begins—Traveling West, Peaches, and a Lasting Symbol—Bluffdale, Illinois—Brownsville and Business—Road to Galena in 1833—Travels and Travails on the Mississippi in the 1830s—A Career in Government Service, A Visit to Chicago—Marriage 1841—Politics and the Jenkins-Logan Clique—Moving to Murphysboro, Illinois—Lumber

Business, the Founding of Carbondale—First Train into Carbondale, a 4th of July,1854, Frontier Celebration—Final Thoughts, the Civil War Years—Christmas Offering and Returning G.I.'s in 1945.

Chapter 4 135
Mrs. Juliette Magill Kinzie: *Wau-Bun, The "Early Day" in the North-West*, Fort Winnebago, Wisconsin Territory, and Chicago in the 1830s
Introduction—Mrs. Kinzie, Journalistic Prose, an International Shift in the Publishing Market—Michigan Territory, Green Bay to Fort Winnebago—Wilderness Journey to Chicago—Black Hawk War, Vulnerability, Full but Heavy Hearts—Final Thoughts.

Chapter 5 189
Mrs. Rebecca Burlend: *A True Picture of Emigration,* Pioneer Life in Western Illinois in the 1830s and '40s
Introduction—Mrs. Rebecca Burlend's Narrative Begins—Life Aboard the *Home* on the Voyage to New Orleans—Hardships and Pike County, Illinois, 1831—Mrs. Burlend's English Audience.

Chapter 6 225
Mr. Edwin Bottomley: *An English Settler in Pioneer Wisconsin*, Strength in Numbers in a Racine County "English Settlement" in the 1840s
Introduction—Crossing the Atlantic—Letters Home to West Yorkshire: "Eating the Bread with Carefulness"—The "Johnny Lingo" Dream—Working Daughters, Behind the Plows—Dark Shadows—Final Thoughts.

Notes.. 272

Bibliography 279

Index 283

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Mr. Hugh Henry Brackenridge
Mrs. Christiana Holmes Tillson
Mr. Daniel Harmon Brush
Mrs. Juliette Magill Kinzie
Mrs. Rebecca Burlend
Mr. Edward Burlend
Title Page, *A True Picture of Emigration*, London, 1848

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For assistance obtaining photos, illustrations, and permissions, I wish to thank Lisa Marine of the Wisconsin Historical Society image center for the portrait of Juliette Magill Kinzie, Dave Teal of the Barwick-in-Elmet Historical Society in England for his clarifying permissions letter on the photo of Rebecca Burlend's son, Edward, and also the staff at the Quincy & Adams County Museum in Illinois for the Christiana Holmes Tillson portrait. I also wish to acknowledge the professional assistance of the staff and librarians at the Wisconsin Historical Society Library and the Wisconsin Historical Society Library Archives, the librarians and staff at Memorial Library on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the librarians and staff at the Newberry Library in Chicago.

I also wish to thank the many people who have expressed an interest in the book's pioneer subject matter over the past few years, including my regular luncheon, dinner, and post-assembly friends at the Holy Wisdom Benedictine Monastery in Madison, Wisconsin, where I found the peace and quiet necessary to pursue much of the research for the book, and also my colleagues at the University of Wisconsin Arboretum, particularly Lisa Andrewski and Levi Wood, who seem genuinely interested in the direction and progress of my literary endeavors. I also wish to thank Adam Rummens, Commissioning Editor, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, for his prompt and gracious early help with the publishing procedure, Sophie Edminson, for help with photo permissions, Mhairi Nicol, for her talented assistance with the book's splendid cover design, and Amanda Millar, for the careful typesetting.

And once again, I find myself deeply indebted to Abigail Loomis, my talented reference librarian partner who regularly agrees to provide an early critical reading of my work and is also rather consistently on the mark with very helpful revisions.

INTRODUCTION

To date, the literary history of America's Old North-West, from the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783 to the 1840s and '50s, the decades that mark the end of the Old-North-West pioneer period, has haphazardly progressed through time with limited agreement among literary historians as to what constitutes a representatively inclusive, definitive early nineteenth century American literary canon. Most circulating anthologies of American literature to date, in spite of efforts to expand the canon to include more women and a better reflection of the nation's racial and sexual diversity, still do not include even a representative token selection of works by pioneer American writers who lived east of the Mississippi River and west of the Alleghenies in the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys in the Old North-West territories between the 1790s and the 1850s.

With the exception of *The First West: Writing from the American Frontier, 1776-1860,* edited by Edward Watts and David Rachels and published by Oxford University Press in 2002, very few Old North-West frontier authors from Western Pennsylvania, and the old Northwest territories of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin have received the recognition they deserve as integral parts of America's rich literary and historical culture. And there were a lot of them.

William H. Venable in a pioneering 1891 account of the *Beginnings of Literary Culture in the Ohio Valley* first compiled an impressive list of publishers, aspiring journalists, and talented writers from that early era, including lengthy commentary on the life and publications of prominent frontier authors who have gained a minimum of recognition, at least, such as Daniel Drake (1785-1852), Timothy Flint (1780-1840), James Hall (1793-1868), and William Davis Gallagher (1808-1894). And the list of authors and titles continues to expand as a host of publications long forgotten and out of print are now available, some originally published in the "Queen City," Cincinnati, Ohio, the publishing center, those days, for the book trade west of the Alleghenies. The list also included many first-edition-only publications not included in Venable's miscellany, now accessible as print-on-demand reproductions, public domain selections for readers interested in acquiring copies of rare publications, particularly first person travel narratives, autobiographical

memoirs, and journals, from writers who were part of the literary and historical culture of America's Old North-West.

After 1891, following Venable's miscellany, not much that was biographical or interpretive was written about authors and selections from the region, especially from the westernmost Territories. In 1925, Ralph Leslie Rusk in a work entitled *The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier* underscored the efforts of Hall, Flint, and Gallagher to promote a "Literature of the Old North-West...marked both by excellence of artistic achievement and a distinctly Western quality" representative particularly of the Ohio Valley and the Lower and Upper Mississippi Valleys in the period just after the Revolutionary War and prior to the 1850s. Rusk also noted that as talented and prolific as the anointed triad of Hall, Flint, and Gallagher was during the early nineteenth century, "Their failure to realize any large measure of artistic achievement may be granted without debate." Nevertheless, he asserted, in spite of the neglect, they did succeed "in creating a body of literature invaluable for the record it contains of the growth of civilization during a unique epoch" (Rusk 1925, 1: vii).

In 1950, R. Carlyle Buley, in *The Old Northwest Pioneer Period, 1815-1840*, an ambitious encyclopedic two volume compendium covering the history, literature, and social and cultural environment of the early American pioneer era reiterated Rusk's concern about the period's neglect and attempted to make a case for "the rich contemporary historical literature of the period and region" and, as he hoped, "through this literature, to capture something of the attitudes and beliefs, struggles and way of life, what Timothy Flint called the material of poetry of the time and place" (Buley 1951, vii).

One commendable scholarly, trade-press exception, however, in the midst of a widespread lack of academic interest, well into the early years of the 20th century, was the notable presence in the publishing world in early 20th century Chicago of the highly talented and acclaimed Dr. Milo Milton Quaife, a historical scholar of true eminence with an uncanny insight into the rare treasures of the early American book market, who was also the first Superintendent of the Wisconsin Historical Society from 1914 to 1920, and who managed between 1916 and his accidental death in 1957 to revive, mainly as Lakeside Classics issued by Chicago's Donnelley & Sons press, attractive annotated editions of neglected works from the Old North-West, including selections written by women and the First People that he deemed worthy of publication for their cultural, literary, and historical value. These rare editions were published with impressive critical and historical introductions, most written by Quaife after 1916,

including among them five selections which constitute five/sixths of the focus of this book. The selections are:

Mrs. Christiana Holmes Tillson's memoir of life on the Illinois frontier from 1822 to 1827, originally published by her family in 1872 or '73 as *Reminiscences of Early Life in Illinois, by Our Mother*; reissued in 1919 by Donnelley & Sons as *A Woman's Story of Pioneer Illinois*, edited with an "Historical Introduction" by Quaife.

Mr. Daniel Harmon Brush's *Growing Up with Southern Illinois, 1820 to 1861: From the Memoirs of Daniel Harmon Brush* edited from an unpublished manuscript with an "Historical Introduction" by Quaife and published as the Lakeside Classic Christmas edition for 1944.

Mrs. Juliette Magill Kinzie's historical account of life as the wife of an Indian Sub-Agent at Fort Winnebago [Wisconsin] in the old Michigan Territory and in frontier Chicago in the 1830s in *Wau-Bun, The "Early Day" in the North-West* (published in 1856 by Derby & Jackson, New York; reissued, with an "Historical Introduction" by Quaife, as the Lakeside Classic Christmas edition for 1932).

Mrs. Rebecca Burlend's memoir of challenges on board a ship bringing English emigrants to America and of the demands of life in Pike County on the Western Illinois frontier during the 1830s in *A True Picture of Emigration: or Fourteen Years in the interior of North America (1848).*

Mr. Edwin Bottomley's *An English Settler in Pioneer Wisconsin: The Letters of Edwin Bottomley, 1842-1850,* mailed home to his family in West Yorkshire, edited by Quaife and first published by the Wisconsin Historical Society in 1918.

These five early American classics were chosen with care and critical historical acumen as "good reads" for reissue by Quaife. He obviously valued them as serious, noteworthy contributions to American history and to the American literary tradition or, certainly, he would never have taken the time or made the effort to market them as Lakeside Classics.

Along with the five Lakeside editions listed above included in this book, I have added as Chapter 1, a critical reading of a sixth historical "classic" from the period, Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *Incidents of the Insurrection in Western Parts of Pennsylvania, in the Year 1794,* his richly textured, vividly detailed three volume account, published in 1795, of the historic "Whiskey Rebellion" of 1791 to 1794.

I have come to believe over the years that the "Whiskey Insurrection," as it was called at the time, represented a dramatic development early on in the history of American sectionalism that set the stage for many of the Old North-West frontier literary offerings that

followed. In particular, I have in mind the ones dealing in depth with regional challenges, the identification of regional characteristics, cultural identities, and, the nexus of American patriotism, literary offerings that, at times, provided accounts of grisly conflicts, along with bizarre absurdities, sometimes comic, mostly not, however, that faced those rugged, but unpredictable, self-sustaining frontier pioneers and settlers.

So many of them were obliged, owing to where in the wilderness they ended up, to locate land that suited them, that they could afford, and that they legally could lay claim to. If they had set about purchasing the land in advance from the federal government or eastern land owners, which was customary, they came west with big dreams and hopes and gambles, one of the biggest gambles was the possibility that they had been swindled or mislead and that the land was barren or too boggy to farm. If not, and the land was fertile, then they had to come to terms with clearing it and building something on it to live in, usually a rustic shanty or a one-room log cabin.

And once settled, the lucky ones, were often obliged to endure agonizing isolation and solitude away from family and friends, near starvation, Indian raids, outlaws, vigilantism, home burnings, crop failures, insect plagues, pestilence, pesky land squatters creating legal conundrums, curious neighboring visitors "coming to call" and wearing out their welcome; absent land owner-investors impossible to connect with for help; threats of foreclosures, political and cultural harassment, and civic and social upheavals of one kind or the other, owing to a lack of any available and workable community organization; along with a scarcity of medical assistance, law enforcement, legal advisers, and hard money for investment or improvement in an expansive wilderness often lacking passable roads or trails into the back country and menacing rivers and streams frequently too flooded to ford. But still they came with high hopes and many endured the challenges posed by the Old North-West territory long enough to overcome them and to emerge as prosperous, well-situated landowners, as we shall see in the case of the six authors and their families included in this book.

The posture on which survival in that wilderness depended necessitated industrious labor, the ability to take things as they found them without great expectations, but with tactful planning and maneuvering, a willingness to fight when necessary, the ability to face life and isolation and inevitable set-backs with candor, strength, and an unabated sense of humor, and an ample degree of patient, unwavering tolerance. All of these qualities are at the root of the "indomitable perseverance" that Mrs. Christiana Holmes Tillson in *A Woman's Story of Pioneer Illinois* identified

as the signature virtue that was essential to "the pursuit of happiness" for the vulnerable pioneers and emigrant homesteaders pursuing their dreams in America's Old North-West during a period in American history that was also marked by rapidly massive changes never seen before, occurring within the five short decades between the 1790s and the 1850s (Tillson 1872-73, 27).

One need only recall that Chicago, once a desolate fur trading post in the Old North-West, within seven years, 1833 to 1840, went from a population of 350 to 4000; Cincinnati, with a population of approximately 2500 in 1810, by 1830, had close to 24,000 inhabitants. The social and political conflicts, the constant need to adapt and to carry on in the face of bleak uncertainties, and the courageous commitments that enabled these hearty and tenacious frontier adventurers, three native born families from America's eastern coast and three British emigrant families from Scotland and England's West Yorkshire, to persevere and not to abandon the dream are all there, talking points, at the core of all six of these literary selections, representative writings from the age that are presented here along with critical summaries, critical introductions, textual interpolations where helpful, and follow-up commentaries, recapitulations or afterwords that strive, I hope, to produce insights that can add depth to the texts and ultimately enrich your reading experience and your grasp of what that very early period in American history was about.

CHAPTER 1: 1790S-1815

MR. HUGH HENRY BRACKENRIDGE: *INCIDENTS OF THE INSURRECTION IN WESTERN... PENNSYLVANIA...IN 1794* AND EARLY AMERICAN SECTIONALISM

Introduction

As I perceive it, the transitional period between 1790, the year when Alexander Hamilton, in a short-sighted, imprudent effort to alleviate the post-Revolutionary War debt, proposed the passage of the controversial excise tax on whiskey, and 1815, the year that marked the end of the War of 1812, is an excellent twenty-five year time frame with which to begin this book about these six Old North-West authors engaged in the pursuit of the American dream and quite willing, if necessary, to meet any challenge and to make whatever sacrifice necessary.

"The pursuit of happiness" for most citizens of the Old North-West required from the outset an admirable willingness to adopt a new world view, a regionalism, characterized by a new conception of the meaning of what was meant by the loaded word, "Country," a *zeitgeist*, based on belief in the freedom to expand in directions, both physically and culturally, that frequently ran counter to the values and world-view that in time many of the Old North-West settlers came to associate with the Eastern Establishment, including in their purview most of the major cities on the Eastern seaboard north of the Tidewater, and early nineteenth-century federalist U.S. Government perspectives on westward expansion, emigration, public domain land, eastern land speculators, nationalism, social well-being, and the dissemination of culture.

The wearisome contention that "civilization" at the time, inclusive of good manners and artistic talent, somehow ended west of the Alleghenies, also accounts for much of the frontier suspicion and, often, open hatred and resistance to what Western settlers, both native born and emigrant,

perceived, sometimes accurately, sometimes not, as a dominating, cultural, economic, and political nexus of money, influence, and intimidation in the Eastern part of the nation. Distrust and fear of exploitation, especially the fear of an economic depression erupting in the West, created an atmosphere of suspicion and volatility in both the East and the West that had the potential for igniting a class war if not a civil war and almost did.

Hence, the emergence of social and civil discord in these early years of the nineteenth century should come as no surprise and is what Edward Watts examines in his provocative 2006 study entitled, *In This Remote Country: French Colonial Culture in the Anglo-American Imagination, 1780-1860.* And for Watts, the "Whiskey Rebellion," the result of Alexander Hamilton's ill-conceived, government enforced, hated excise tax and the riots that ensued in 1794, made many "Anglo-Americans along the east coast fearful of either losing totally or losing control of their western lands."

As a result, the frontier "Rebellion" and the threat of similar conspiracies emerging among the rustic and unpredictable commoners out West, Watts maintains, "also set in motion a cultural pattern of marginalizing frontier whites" in a conscious attempt, epitomized at the time by Hamilton, as Secretary of the Treasury, at discouraging their participation in federal government thus rendering them politically powerless. Watts also suggests that regularly in Eastern accounts of the lives and manners of frontier white people, white frontiersmen especially, were "bestialized and otherwise diminished" by heavily biased accounts of rude manners and gruff and often belligerent defensiveness and even, at times, by the purposeful transcription of the common emigrant and frontier idiom "into phonetic dialect" that could be good for laughs but was also demeaning (Watts 2006, 38).

Indeed, the complexity of challenges that life in the untamed "Country" demanded at the time were clearly epitomized by what the "Whiskey Rebellion" between 1792 and 1794, three years after Hamilton's appointment as treasury secretary and a mere nine years after the Revolutionary War ended, represented to the pioneers and settlers who found themselves caught up in the insurrection, one of whom was Attorney Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748-1816), a talented lawyer and writer, among other distinctions, who was so consumed by the insurrection and the manner in which he was drawn into it, that he published a three volume assessment in 1795 addressing developments leading up to the Rebellion, a threatening and potentially violent march on Pittsburgh in 1794, and the events that followed, including the trials of those, after the

Rebellion was quelled, who, at the command of Hamilton, were arraigned on charges of treason and force marched to Philadelphia.

Hugh Henry Brackenridge (photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons)

Attorney Brackenridge also added to his hefty three volume account an ambitious concluding appendix of 112 pages on the particulars of the indictments for treason following the Rebellion and an accompanying exegesis for the benefit of his readers of U.S. treason law. The three volume tome, entitled *Incidents of the Insurrection in the Western Parts of Pennsylvania, in the Year 1794,* published in Philadelphia in 1795, is a dramatic literary showpiece for the Old North-West period, parts of which are so well written and so historically significant, that it prompted Professor Ed White, a Brackenridge specialist, in his "Introduction" to his 2009 edition of Brackenridge's satirically comic novel, *Modern Chivalry*, to refer to *Incidents of the Insurrection,* as "a fascinating work," and to point out that in places it "reads like an historical novel, while… treating

the question of state sovereignty in relation to popular democratic sentiment and activity" (White 2009, ix).

I also believe that *Incidents of the Insurrection*, or, at least, parts of it, deserves more recognition than it has received over the years, particularly for the insight that Attorney Brackenridge brings to a dramatic and incisive early rendering of the psychology of mob thinking and mob violence, still and currently a grave national concern, during a clarifying moment in early American history when conciliatory players, including particularly Attorney Brackenridge himself, who were caught up in the insurrection, managed quite resourcefully to bring about a sensible resolution to the irrational violence that saved lives, the Union, and an ideal associated with democracy that was more a state of feeling than intellect. And as I point out in the following section, saving lives, the Union, and the democratic ideal they did, unlike salient and parallel developments in France that were occurring at the same time. Keep in mind that the years, 1792 to 1795, mark the dates of the horrific and bloody "Reign of Terror." And, not surprisingly, the French Revolution was very much on the minds of the Whiskey Rebellion insurgents, many of whom actually found it and anarchy inspirational. It was also on the minds of those who were on the receiving end of the mob violence, well aware of Madame Guillotine, whose worse fears were exacerbated; a coincidental accident of history, yes, but also a contemporary, ongoing worry that Attorney Brackenridge alludes to frequently.

Mr. Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748-1816) was an emigrant. He was born into rural poverty in Scotland, in Campbelton on the Kintyre peninsula. He emigrated with his family to America when he was five years old. The family first arrived in Philadelphia in 1753 and then traveled west to a frontier Scots-Irish settlement in present day York County, Pennsylvania, in what was known at the time as the "York Barrens," located in what is now the southeastern portion of the county. The family purchased a small plot of land which they labored to clear and then farmed. Young Hugh Brackenridge was never given to farming and took as much advantage as he could of the classical education made available in the settlement by Presbyterian ministers and teachers who instilled in him a desire to study Scottish Enlightenment philosophers and the Greek and Roman classics, which he did, and which assisted him eventually with an admission in 1768 to the College of New Jersey, later known as Princeton. He trained for the Presbyterian ministry while at Princeton but developed more of an inclination for the world of politics, law, and principles associated with the pursuit of moral philosophy and social justice. He continued with his college education, finally earning a

master's degree in 1774, but his future reputation was to be made not as an ordained minister but on the basis of his journalistic, literary, philosophical, and legal skills.

He was all things at once, minister, poet, satirist, journalist, editor, lawyer, justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and eventually the prolific author of numerous literary publications, including, along with *Incidents of the Insurrection* (1795)*,* a lengthy fictional work entitled *Modern Chivalry,* published piecemeal between 1792 and 1815. *Modern Chivalry* lays claim to the possibility of being the first American novel, the first literary offering of any significance in the Old North-West, and the first book-length publication in the history of American literature to present a critical assessment of American cultural and political traits comically satirized after a fashion reminiscent of Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605) but also of the Anglo-Irish novelist and humorist Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1756), with a touch of Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* (1663) and Jonathan Swift's *Tale of a Tub* (1704) thrown in. Brackenridge would also be the force behind the founding of the *Pittsburgh Gazette* in 1786*,* the first newspaper published west of the Alleghenies, and, in a conscious attempt while still living in Philadelphia to promote early frontier American writers, the founder and editor of *The United States Magazine* (1779).[1]

In the spring of 1781, he left Philadelphia and traveled on horseback through the Alleghenies to Western Pennsylvania with designs on making a cultural and political difference as a practicing attorney. He ended up in Pittsburgh when it was a village inhabited by little more than four hundred residents, most of whom, along with a spattering of German emigrants, were Scots or Scots-Irish emigrants. It was at some point between 1780 and 1781 when he gradually began to discern what he interpreted as a corrosive Eastern federalist elitist bias towards frontier and especially emigrant settlers. Many of these frontier pioneers also were direct descendants of pre-war British traders and settlers who had moved into Western Pennsylvania as early as the 1750s and were living east of the Mississippi and north of the Ohio River in the Old North-West territory before and after the Revolutionary War.

An Eastern bias that threatened the Western "pursuit of happiness," Brackenridge thought, was partially the result of an ongoing fidelity that some Old North-West settlers, and their descendants, in particular, those of British extraction living in the frontier west of the Alleghenies prior to the Revolutionary War, retained for the British, owing particularly to British economic assistance, much of it trade-related, that they had received over the years, much of it originating in Canada in

British Detroit, arguably, the oldest frontier settlement west of the Alleghenies and north of the Tidewater, and also to decades of British military protection from Indian tribes in parts of the Old North-West territory loyal to the British both during and after the Revolutionary War and prior to the War of 1812. And then there also was the lingering feeling among many of the Old North-West settlers, especially tradesmen, that independence from Great Britain hadn't improved their lot at all and that the nation's wealth was still in the hands of the money baggers, the gentry, the elite, the rich Eastern entrepreneurs, who were marketing Western land holdings and who had little concern for democratic ideals, states' rights, and the welfare of the "rustics," the backwoods Western Traders, pioneers, and settlers. "

The "Whiskey Insurrection," as it was known at the time, occurred mainly in the Pennsylvania counties west of the Allegheny Mountains and was an organized armed protest against Hamilton's excise tax, done to raise money after the Revolution to pay off the massive government debt. Now whiskey during that time in history had acquired the status of an elixir of life, especially for Northwestern frontiersmen. For many it was the replacement for water, and that's how they drank it, that is, daily, and in large quantities. But farmers and small business people in Western Pennsylvania and elsewhere in the Western states and territories also distilled their own whiskey and sold it openly. It was distributed eastward, also, to customers along the Eastern coast. It provided precious extra income. A whiskey tax, along with cutting into their profits, would make Western distillers less competitive with Eastern grain producers who also distilled whiskey and with minimal transportation costs could sell the whiskey at a much cheaper rate. The Western distillers were facing going out of business and imminent bankruptcy. The conflicting sentiments made an already difficult historical situation in the Western territories even worse, one that the passage of Alexander Hamilton's hated "Whiskey Tax" exacerbated.

And so, Western settlers and homesteaders viewed the tax in all respects as an oppressive federal government effort to enforce "taxation without representation," ironically a major rallying factor in opposition to British rule at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. Many of the Old North-West distillers were patriotic war veterans who believed they were fighting once again for the principles of freedom they had associated with the American Revolution during the conflict, in particular, opposition against "taxation without representation." The federal government, however, dominated particularly by Hamilton and located in distant Philadelphia at the time maintained that the tax was legal, passed by the

U.S. Congress, and was now the law of the land.

The tax law had been approved by Congress on January 27, 1791. It was a folly from the outset, certain to create enmity and resistance in the Northwest, and Hamilton knew it. And it would also have an absurdly distinguished history of stubborn non-payment by Western whiskey distillers right up to its repeal in 1802. Within six months of its passage, on July 27, 1791, a large vocal contingent of opponents of the tax from Western Pennsylvania and elsewhere in the Northwestern territories who refused to pay it and were ready to fight against it gathered officially at Fort Redstone in Brownsville, Pennsylvania, approximately forty miles south of Pittsburgh, for the first illegal, open meeting to consider organized oppositional resistance, the first of many gatherings that would follow. For the next two years, opposition to the tax grew and the mood out there in the "Country" became increasingly more volatile. Attempts at negotiations failed, leading to mass rioting and to brutal physical abuse of various government agents including government tax collectors and local law enforcement officers who were shot at, beaten, and, in some instances, stripped naked, tarred, and feathered. Homes of government officials were burned and officials and family members were brutalized. For most of the militant rebels the conflict evolved into a simple case of "you're either with us or against us," hence, the regular display among them of the Gadsden flag, "Don't Tread on Me," depicting a coiled timber rattlesnake about to strike.

In spite of the efforts of moderate resisters to maintain the peace, the mood in the Country remained intense, combative, and unrestrained. Mr. Albert Gallatin, a native of Switzerland and an outspoken opponent and early critic of Hamilton's one-sided economic policies, was one of the most influential moderates, although he was highly suspect among government supporters. He would be elected to the U. S. Senate in 1793 but would be removed from office after a protest raised by Hamilton supporters forced him to resign owing to his failure to meet a nine years citizenship eligibility rule. Returning to Pennsylvania to live, Albert Gallatin openly opposed the whiskey tax but also opposed armed violent opposition and served as a calming influence on many angry Country farmers. He would go on to establish an eminently successful career as a remarkable American diplomat. Another influential calming influence was "the lawyer," as he was known in the Country, Mr. Hugh Henry Brackenridge, himself, who also opposed the whiskey tax, but as a popular and well experienced consultant attorney also advised against the insurgency and the price to be paid for any violent physical or armed response. But he ultimately would be caught in the vulnerable middle,

viewed by many of the insurgents as a U.S. Government sympathizer and, ironically, by many government officials as an influential force and instigator supportive of the threatening mob violence.

The Conflict Unfolds: July 1794

"Bower Hill" was the name of an estate with a mansion near Pittsburgh owned by General John Neville, a friend of George Washington and an influential federalist, who in 1794 was appointed Inspector of the Revenue by Washington. Enforcing and collecting the excise whiskey tax was General Neville's responsibility and one he took most seriously for a number of reasons, one of which was that he also happened to be a whiskey distiller himself who owned one of the largest distilleries in the territory and saw the tax as a sure bet to drive small competitors in the territory out of business. The people from the Country, mostly farming homesteaders, resented him and his conflict of interest and were prepared to defy him and, if necessary, to take up arms and fight.

During a two day period from Wednesday, July 16 to Thursday, July 17, 1794, approximately six-hundred angry, flag waving, unruly insurgents gathered, formed a militia, and on the 16th moved on Inspector of the Revenue, General John Neville's Bower Hill mansion, to demand his resignation as Inspector of the Revenue. A small group of ten U.S. troops under the command of Major Abraham Kirkpatrick, General Neville's brother-in-law, were in the house and proceeded to confront the rebels. General Neville, to his timely good fortune, had vacated the premises before the rebellious mob arrived. A gun battle ensued that lasted for two days; at the end of which, on the 17th, fatalities on both sides had occurred. Greatly outnumbered, Major Kirkpatrick and his soldiers were obliged to surrender. General Neville's Bower Hill mansion was burned to the ground, mainly and abruptly in retaliation for the unexpected death of a well- respected rebel leader named Mr. James McFarlane, a distinguished Revolutionary War veteran, who was fired on from the mansion, took a bullet in the groin, and died. The killing occurred, after a white flag had appeared at the window of the mansion and a cease fire had been called. General Neville who seemed to have had an uncanny knack for dodging bullets and recrimination would remain as an influential and affluent politico in Allegheny County until his death in 1803.

But less than a month after the July 16th and 17th 1794 Battle at General Neville's Bower Hill estate, on Friday, August 1st 1794, the disorderly mob which had grown to more than seven-thousand people and included farmers and some townspeople who now supported the cause

even if they had no commercial interest in whiskey commerce, banded together for a march on Pittsburgh where they expected to wreak havoc. They were led by Mr. David Bradford, an ill-tempered populist lawyer and twisted opportunist who was the deputy attorney general for Washington County, Pennsylvania, and who was worshipped by his rowdy followers, according to William Hogeland, as "the Washington of the west" while parading around as a "Major General" on a "big horse, in a gaudy uniform, with a flashing sword and a hat with plumes" (Hogeland 2006, 174). An acknowledged admirer of Robespierre, Bradford had emerged in the two weeks following the Bower Hill battle as the anointed leader and spokesman for the insurgents. He also likely saw in the Rebellion the possibility for potential political gain and the possible realization of a crackpot anti-governmental, seditious vision, fueled by news of the revolutionary overthrow in France and shared by many of the deranged insurgents who followed him, of an eventual territorial overthrow and secession from the federal Union as a means of acquiring political sway and access to coveted U.S. Government and territorial land west of the Alleghenies in Pennsylvania and beyond into the "Old North-West" prior to the 1803 Louisiana Purchase.

Mr. Bradford was also, not surprisingly, a totally unrealistic and delusional proponent of what armed resistance actually created. He believed in an eventual overthrow of the government and he refused to even acknowledge the existence of the threat posed by a fully equipped army division of approximately 13,000 militiamen already on its way west, sent by President Washington to put down the poorly armed insurgency. Once the rebellion was quelled, Mr. Bradford, in a cowardly frenzy and to avoid arrest, fled to Spanish Louisiana with a price on his head where he would remain as an outcast for the remainder of his life. From the outset of the Whiskey Rebellion, Attorney Hugh Henry Brackenridge had pegged Mr. David Bradford as an insufferable, disingenuous, unhinged psychopath whom he did not trust.

After inciting the mob at a rally at Braddock's Field, a historic battlefield on the banks of the Monongahela River, a few miles southeast of Pittsburgh, Mr. Bradford, on Friday, August 1st 1794, led the armed mob into Pittsburgh where lives and property were threatened and where immediate action was called for. This is the point in volume one of *Incidents of the Insurrection* where Attorney Brackenridge begins his detailed account of how events developed during the dramatic and very emblematic climax in the summer of 1794 of the four year whiskey insurrection and his role both in the conflict and in the attempts to deliberate a peaceful solution.[2]

Mr. Brackenridge's Narrative "All I have in the world is in this Country"

We take up Attorney Brackenridge's narrative at the point where the mob was inside Pittsburgh. Close to 7000 of them had invaded the town. Among other enormities, they were planning to burn the Pittsburgh home of Army Major Abraham Kirkpatrick who had commanded the U.S. government troops who defended General Neville's Bower Hill mansion on July 16th and 17th 1794. Even though Attorney Brackenridge strongly disliked Major Kirkpatrick, he took it upon himself to attempt to thwart the imminent threat of the disorganized mob destroying not only the Major's house but also the city of Pittsburgh itself. He understood and sympathized with the grievances of the Country folk but also deeply distrusted any vestige of mob mentality and he was singularly contemptuous of Mr. Bradford and the many insurgents who were more interested in the opportunity to plunder than to serve justice.

And speaking of "plunder," he recorded in his detailed account of the insurrection that on Friday, August 1, 1794, the day the 7000 rioters marched into Pittsburgh, there were numerous groups of women on the hills opposite the town who had collected at a distance in order purposely to watch the destruction of Pittsburgh and to then share in the plunder. On the day before, Thursday, July 31, a mob of nearly a thousand rioters, within a distance of only four or five miles from Pittsburgh had halted and deliberated and with difficulty were prevented from entering and plundering. On another road on the same day, Attorney Brackenridge noted, rioters had gathered in order to plunder and burn the farm of Mr. Presley Neville, General John Neville's younger son. The farm, however, was occupied by renters. "The mob deliberated on burning the house anyway and were prepared to shoot the tenant's wife," Attorney Brackenridge noted, should she raise any objections to the burning.

On Friday, August 1, 1794, the attack on Pittsburgh ensued. Brackenridge wrote: "I found General Wilkins and a number with arms rushing down" toward the town. He attempted to stop them. General John Wilkins, Jr. in 1793 had been appointed Commander of the Allegheny County Militia by Pennsylvania's Governor Thomas Mifflin. Mr. Brackenridge addressed General Wilkins and the Militia: "This will not do;" he contended, "it is contrary to the system we have hitherto pursued and which has been successful. Return, and lay down your arms. If a drop of blood is shed," he maintained, between the people of Pittsburgh and the regional Militia, "it will never be forgiven." The result will lead to tumult in the town and between the inhabitants and the people from the Country.

And, furthermore, he added, if the rioters who have crossed the Monongahela River in order to burn down Major Kirkpatrick's home are permitted to re-cross the river, Pittsburgh will be destroyed with many lives lost. If Major Kirkpatrick's home is to be defended, he continued, it must be defended "by the people of the Country themselves" and not by a government Militia.

In a bold effort to save Pittsburgh from being burned and plundered, he had also taken it upon himself on that Friday, the 1st of August, to convince the ferry boat hands working on the Monongahela to tie up the ferry boats and to secure them on the Pittsburgh side of the river to prevent the angry rioters who at the urging of Bradford were planning on re-crossing the river in order to plunder the dwellings and burn down the town.

Now "it will be queried," he added, "whence the authority that I insinuate myself to have possessed" originates. What right do I have to interfere with the orders of General Wilkins, Commander of the Allegheny County Militia, with regard to the defense of Major Kirkpatrick's house by the Militia and in ordering the ferry boats on the Monongahela to remain all night with the boat hands? And so where *did* Attorney Brackenridge's authority originate? He noted that he now was a seated member of the Conference Committee from Parkinson's Ferry which was supposed to have superseded for that occasion all other authority. We were national commissioners, he added. And General Wilkins was not totally in charge in spite of his rank. "I was a member of the Committee and had equal power with him."

He continued. "The affair at Braddock's Field," the historical battlefield where the mob had been inflamed by Bradford's harangues, had gathered en-masse, 7000 strong, prior to their march to Pittsburgh. One might ask, he added, about the impossibility of 250 or 300 men, which was the size of the Pittsburgh Militia at the time, protecting the town against 7000 insurgents? And the people of Pittsburgh could not be counted on to protect themselves. One might also argue, he continued, that the Pittsburgh inhabitants have the advantage of buildings out of which to fire; but so had Major Kirkpatrick's troops at General John Neville's Bower Hill mansion on July 17th, and yet the buildings were burned. And we must assume he added, that a goodly proportion of Pittsburgh's inhabitants have not yet acquired the same rights to property as have others and hence would be less inclined to risk their lives in defense of the town. And another proportion of its inhabitants, from their acquaintance or connection with the 'Country,' would presume to be safe from harm and would not even choose to defend the town.

Yes, "the [Country] people were mad," he noted. "And if any man wishes to calculate the force of [that] madness, let him think of the French revolution and the storming of the Bastille and the Tuileries." It never occurred to me, he observed, nor did I hear anyone else suggest the idea of even using force on this August 1st occasion when the mob threatened to burn the town. "*I thought it the safest way to [distribute] good words and good drink [among all the gatherers] rather than balls and powder. [And so,] it cost me four barrels of old whiskey that day; but I would rather spare [barrels of whiskey] than a single quart of blood,"* he remarked. And, accordingly, as a result of his shifting the atmospheric focus from looting, plundering, and burning to a social gathering with free whiskey for all, rioters, militia, and townspeople, Pittsburgh was saved (italics mine).

A day or two after the Pittsburgh attack, Attorney Brackenridge noted that a friend from Washington told him that Mr. Presley Neville, General John Neville's son, had expressed to him his suspicion that Mr. Brackenridge was in confidence with Mr. David Bradford and had been privy to the interception of stolen mail from Pittsburgh and had promoted the idea of the expulsion of the letter writers from the town. Here Mr. Brackenridge is referring to an earlier rebel assault on Saturday, July 26th, 1794, instigated by Bradford, on a U.S. mail carrier and the blatantly illegal robbery of posted letters from certain worried citizens of Pittsburgh who had written to the Federal Government in Philadelphia expressing their anger and disapproval of the rebellious mob's attack on General John Neville's mansion at Bower Hill and on incendiary antigovernment speeches delivered by Bradford at the Mingo Creek Church, a Presbyterian meeting house.

Officials from Pittsburgh, fearful of the mob and under serious threats, were forced to expel the well-intended letter writers from the city at the command of Bradford and the insurgents; and the city in a suppliant act of reparation offered Bradford and his followers several barrels of whiskey. In his own defense, Attorney Brackenridge explained that the charge against him of collusion with Bradford and the rioters "was totally improbable," that he was not guilty, as Mr. Presley Neville had claimed, of laying out any plan that encouraged people to write condemnatory letters to the government about the rebel threat; and that, furthermore, to think him guilty was absurd because accomplishing that kind of feat was paranormal; it suggested that he had some kind of exceptional "invisible power over the minds of individuals so as to make them act as the projector wished.... This observation was decisive." And then he wryly added the tongue in cheek observation, that "I must have had a supernatural

power or uncommon good fortune in having these persons to do what would give pretense for the expulsion which had been previously projected." Presley Neville, he added, could not answer this retort; but said "that if I had not projected [the letter writing and the expulsion of the writers from Pittsburgh] I was pleased with it now that it had taken place. I was struck for the first time," Brackenridge humorously quipped, "with the knowledge that [Presley] Neville had not a perfect confidence in me; but it did not make much impression on me, as I conceived him in a fever and like persons in a fever ready to complain of those that were taking the best care of them."

In early August, not long after the mob and the militia left Pittsburgh, the official Conference Committee on which Attorney Brackenridge served met at a local pub where they learned that Major Kirkpatrick, the Army commander who had surrendered his troops at the Bower Hill mansion and who was also General Neville's brother-in-law, "had returned to town and was then in the garrison. It excited great indignation," Brackenridge observed, because Kirkpatrick had deceived them, leading them to suppose and hope that he was gone for good. "Some of the people of the town who had heard that Kirkpatrick was back in the garrison and not knowing that the committee had taken measures," Brackenridge added, were determined to lay in wait for him. "Their view was to take him and surrender him to the Country. It has been said that some talked of shooting him; and that, he was actually fired upon as he came out of the garrison when he went away."

The Conference Committee upon hearing this rumor was seriously troubled with prospects for violence and the fear of anarchy, and so they "called a town meeting in the evening...[where] the idea... prevailed that all law was at an end, that a justice of the peace could issue no warrant or a constable serve it." It fell to Attorney Brackenridge to address the spectators at the meeting and to denounce in strong terms the impropriety of acting against anyone, even Major Kirkpatrick without orders from the Committee. He was obliged also to inform the spectators that law was still in force. The Country people had an idea, he observed, that shooting down opponents of the insurgency or arresting and imprisoning them was acceptable. Major Kirkpatrick was to have had an escort of two men assisting him out of town, but only one joined him. With the person who had joined him, he managed to escape the wrath of the Country people by a circuitous route until he reached the Allegheny Mountains and from there he did follow the road to safety.

Prothonotary Brison, a chief clerk for the law courts, however, who worked for General Neville, had been detained for a night at the

house of a deputy attorney for the commonwealth located at a distance of some miles from Pittsburgh. "It was rumored in the neighborhood," Brackenridge added, that Brison was still in the house. A party of about forty insurgents surrounded the house in order to arrest him. They demanded entrance. A lady who was with the deputy attorney fainted as a result of the threat. A mulatto servant woman was sent to the spring for a glass of cool water in order to revive the woman. But because of her dark complexion and the darkness of the night, the mulatto servant was taken for Brison himself attempting to escape disguised as a woman. "She was pursued" he noted, and leaving the glass behind, fled for her life into the woods. The Country rebels thought that Brison had escaped, and their resentment fell on the deputy attorney now accused of harboring a criminal. And it was not until the frightened mulatto servant after recovering herself had returned and explained the mistaken identity that the deputy attorney could convince the Country rebels of the truth and was spared.

"The inspection offices through the whole survey, comprehending five counties," Attorney Brackenridge noted, "had by this time been burned down" along with all the houses of General Neville's deputies. Liberty poles with inscriptions were raised everywhere. Inscriptions such as a snake divided, with this motto, "united we stand, divided we fall" and devices such as "an equal tax, and no excise" were evident throughout the countryside. Brackenridge observed that no one actually seemed to advocate openly either separation from or the overthrow of the government. Their hostility was directed at the excise tax. And yet, he added, the Country people acted as if we were in a state of revolution. Their actions threatened life and property. And they talked of prohibiting seated judges, such as Alexander Addison, the Federal Judge of the Fifth District Judicial Court of Western Pennsylvania, who was in Philadelphia at the time, from returning to the Country. They were now bent on taking all law, particularly federal law, into their own hands.

At this point in his narrative, Attorney Brackenridge sadly admits to not knowing how to deal with the angry rebels incensed by menacing demagogues like Bradford who advocated rebellion, insurrection, secession, and even war, if necessary. Brackenridge was convinced that many of the remaining rebels really had no idea of the extent and potential danger of what they were promoting or, more to the point, wouldn't dare to admit it in fear of recrimination, and he acknowledged that he was now worried for his own safety and for his life. He pondered how he could escape the danger without recrimination, without also being tagged a

federal government supporter and, therefore, an enemy of the Country insurgents.

Brackenridge Ponders His Immediate Future

"It was better to conceal and lie by a little until it could be seen what arrangements could be made for the restoration of order," he noted. "The most delicate conduct was necessary in order to avoid giving offense." Some days later, he went on, he was reading an advertisement, written by a Country insurgent that was posted at a public house in Pittsburgh and he was laughing with some others at the crude singularity of the phraseology and orthography. Suddenly, he noticed two or three of the Country rebels listening and reacting negatively. He noted that "they had conceived our merriment, at the expense of the advertisement, to indicate an undervaluing of the writer and the service." In response, he added, "I canvassed my situation fully and began more seriously to think of emigration; but in that case, I would be considered... a deserter." He worried that he would somehow lose all of his property. He wrote, "I thought of disposing of my house, which was perishable, to some individual less conspicuous and under his name save it. But that would be suspected or discovered."

He also thought of getting away, of traveling, on some pretense that would be believable, and he thought about asking people in Pittsburgh to appoint him as some type of envoy going somewhere to represent them and to explain their dilemma. He mentioned the idea to James Ross a commissioner at the Conference Committee meetings who represented the federal government and who would also serve as a U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania from 1794 to 1803. Mr. Ross approved of the plan, and at Mr. Brackenridge's request agreed to ask General Wilkins to arrange the means for Brackenridge to travel. Mr. Ross approached General Wilkins with the idea, but General Wilkins was unwilling to support Brackenridge leaving town because, as the General explained to Ross, he was in the same situation with the same worries as Attorney Brackenridge and, therefore, he did not want to lose the company of someone under similar duress.

"I have learned since," Brackenridge noted, "that there were more in the same situation and with the same reflections" and who also planned somehow to leave the Country. Some, he remarked, were planning to use the excuse of leaving in order to purchase well needed "powder," by which, he meant going for "arms and ammunition," the purchase of which served at the time as a very feasible excuse for leaving. There is also the