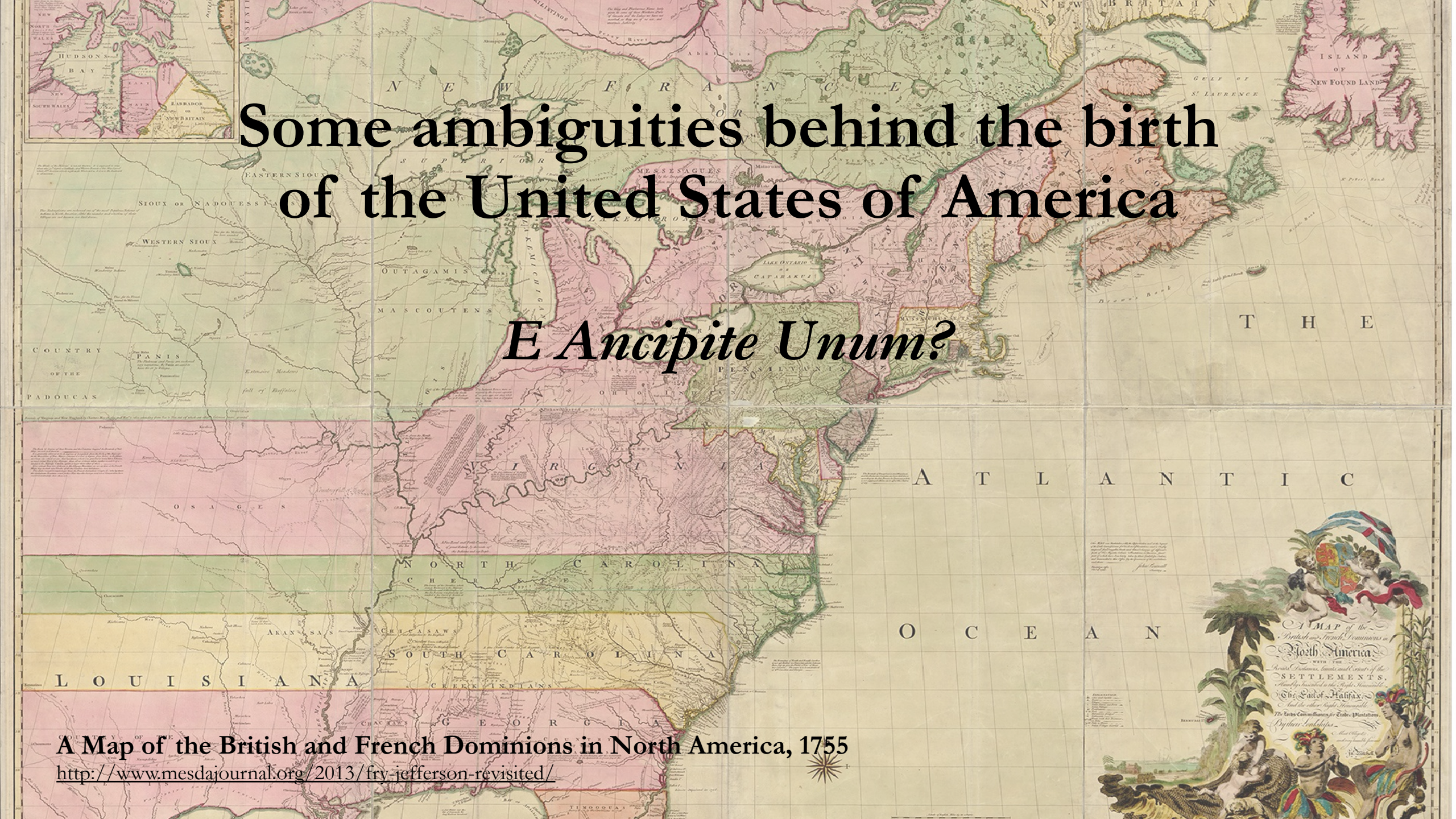




Some ambiguities behind the birth of the United States of America

E Ancipite Unum?

A Map of the British and French Dominions in North America, 1755

<http://www.mesdajournal.org/2013/fry-jefferson-revisited/>

1. a fractured opinion

Nathaniel Philbrick,
Bunker Hill: A City, a Siege, a Revolution
(2013)

What is all just about the money?

The *Quero* schooner, 1775



BAKER, Thomas S. c. 1775 (reproduction date unknown).
Schooner "QUERO" departing Derby Wharf, Salem, Mass. by-nc-
sa/2.0/. Available via Flickr:
https://live.staticflickr.com/65535/52881760106_84fec63f44_b.jpg

2. some (not so) ambiguous founding words...

. Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776):
“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all **men** are created equal”

. Amendment V to the Constitution (1791):
“No person shall (...) be deprived of life, liberty, or **property**”

. Constitution of the United States (1787):
“**Person[s] held to Service or Labour**” (Article IV, Section 2)

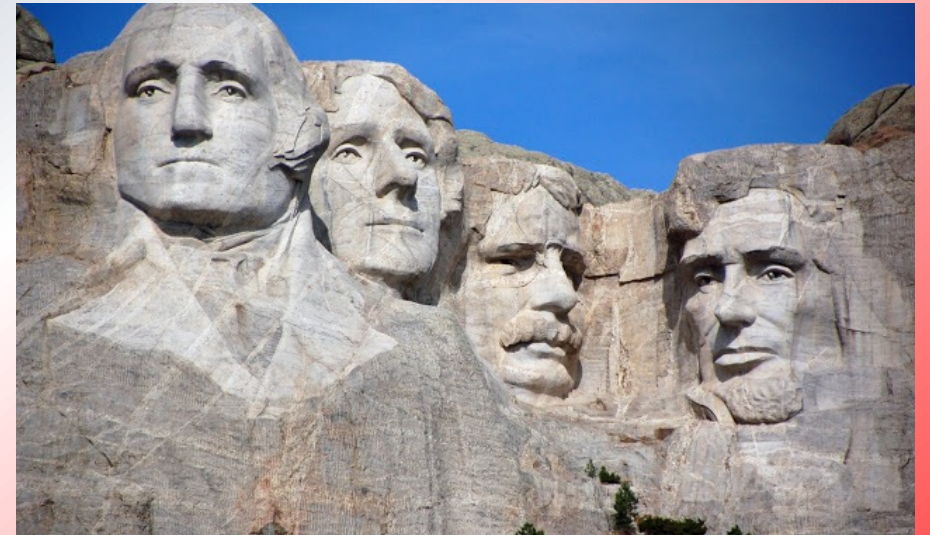
Derrick Bell’s “constitutional contradiction”

Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition* (1948)

3. a chicken and egg question: did the several states create the Union, or the other way around?

A completely new idea: dividing power vertically!

- . The federalist approach: Hamilton, Adams
- . The anti-federalist approach: Jefferson, Madison
- . (Much) later: the approach of the Southern Confederacy (1860) – no more Union!



WOLF, Thomas. c. 2010. Mount Rushmore National Memorial, South Dakota, United States. Photograph, dimensions vary. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>

4. “D” is for a dirty word – democracy

The Founders’ fear of the “passions of the people” (or *demos*)

The in-built safeguards in the Constitution to keep the *demos* at a safe distance

Rome better than Athens

“All communities divide themselves into the few and the many.” (Hamilton, 1787)

5. sectional frenemies: the North-South rivalry

Cultural differences from North to South

Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893)

Different, yet complementary, economies:

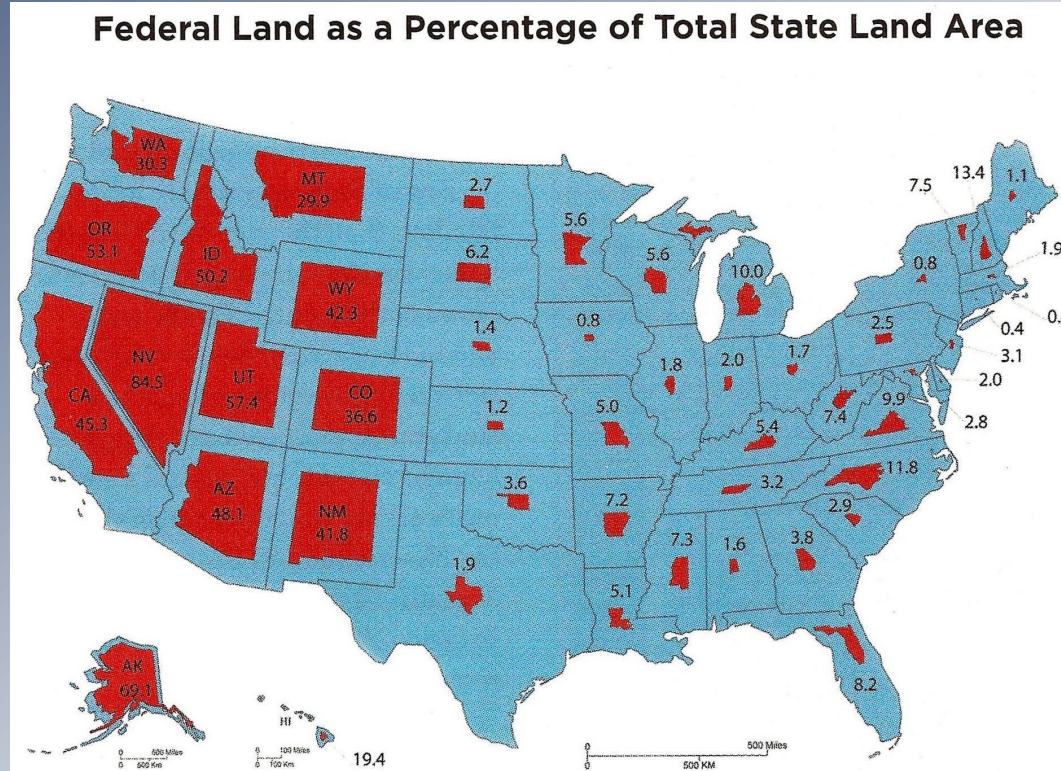
- . manufacturing versus agrarianism
- . free labour *versus* slavery



ZIETZ, Richard. 2007. The Thirteen Colonies of British America. Digital map. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>.

6. the West and its myths

Land of self-reliant pioneers or
“kindergarten of the American state”
(Richard White)?



https://henrymakow.com/upload_images/who-owns-the-west.jpeg

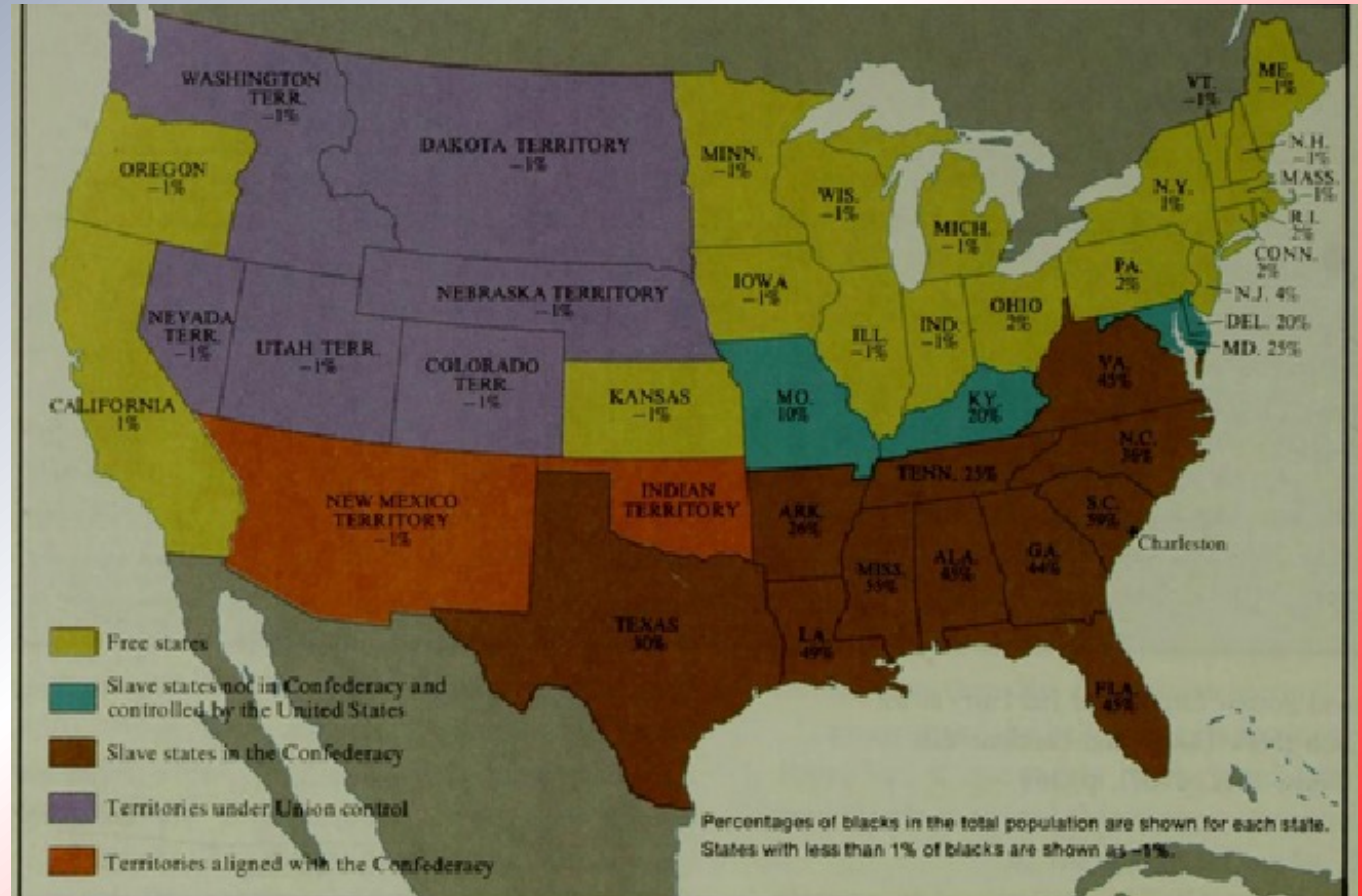


<https://worldhistoryedu.com/louisiana-purchase-1803-summary-cost-significance/>

7. The Civil War (1861-5) and its debatable causes

“the center of American history”
(Sidney Mead)

What is all just about slavery?



M.B. Norton *et al.*, *A People and a Nation*, 1996, p. 376

8. the unclear nature of the United States?

- . the traditional view: from nation (18th century) to Empire (late 19th century)
- . the alternative view: Steven Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders* (2016): from descendant of Empire to nation (1865) to reconfigured Empire



LEUTZE, Emanuel. 1861. Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way. Mural, United States Capitol, Washington, D.C. Licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>.