

Emma Willard and the graphic foundations of American history

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Abstract

Emma Hart Willard (1787–1870) authored one of the most widely printed textbooks of United States history, and created the first historical atlas of the United States. By drawing maps, graphs, and pictures of the country's past, Willard helped translate the fact of the country as a physical entity into the much more powerful fact of the country as a nation. Given the current academic preoccupation with the production, experience, and depiction of space, Willard's experimentation with the relationship of history and geography is highly worthy of close attention. Willard used the spatial dimension of the American past to engage students, develop their memories, integrate history and geography, and—most importantly—to consolidate national identity. In the process, learning itself became an act of nationalism.

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‘...in history I have invented the map.’ Emma Hart Willard, 1848

Emma Hart Willard was one of the most influential educators in the nineteenth-century United States. She founded one of the nation's first institutions of female education, and authored a wide range of school texts, including one of the earliest histories of the United States and the nation's first historical atlas. Yet her life and work have drawn very little scholarly attention. There is still no critical biography, although her name is familiar to many historians of American thought and culture. Willard's role in founding one of the first—and most influential—schools for girls seems

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to have secured her place in histories of education, but her deliberate construction of national history, particularly through images and cartography, has been substantially ignored. This is regrettable, because with these visuals she reoriented not just the form but the content of American history education.¹

Willard's intense interest in cartography was a function of her more general fascination with the idea of graphic representation, and she devoted tremendous energy to 'mapping time' in the way that cartography mapped space. As she put it with characteristic self-confidence, while her geography textbooks might have depended upon the cartography of her predecessors, 'in history I have invented the map.'² I stress her use of history and cartography because it marks the convergence of two critical trends in American cultural and intellectual history: pedagogical reforms inspired Willard and others to visualize information for their students, while the proliferation of historical maps and charts in the antebellum period became an ideal medium not just to communicate complex information, but also to give a spatial dimension to abstract concepts such as history and nationhood. Perhaps most interesting is that these trends converged as the nation experienced tremendous territorial growth and political upheaval. Willard was uncommonly adept at exploiting these changes. In both metaphorical and literal ways, she 'mapped' history in order to create a national past that would translate the fact of the country as a territorial entity into the much more powerful idea of the country as a nation.

The origins of national history

The decades after the Revolution were full of calls to extend the nation's newly achieved independence into other areas, and this sensibility greatly influenced the construction of knowledge, in overt and subtle ways. Most cultural historians are familiar with Noah Webster's many spellers and grammars, designed to train schoolchildren in the particularities of the national language. And most historians of geography know well the name of Jedediah Morse, who demanded—and then supplied—textbooks that would capture and convey a uniquely American geography. Both enjoyed tremendous success and unrivaled influence in American schools, and did much to transform their subjects into handmaidens of nation building. But

¹ For many years, the sole general study of American historical cartography omitted Willard's work altogether, dating the origin of the historical atlas map in 1874, nearly a half century after her first atlas was published. Lawrence Towner's study of nineteenth-century historical cartography of the Revolution also ignores Willard's work altogether, stating that no historical maps of significance emerged until late century. See L.J. Cappon, The historical map in American atlases, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 69, 4 (December 1979) 622–634, and L.W. Towner, The mapping of the American Revolutionary War in the nineteenth century, in: J.B. Harley, B.B. Petchenik and L.W. Towner, *Mapping the American Revolutionary War*, Chicago, 1978. The most provocative work on Willard has actually come not from historians or historically inclined geographers but rather from literary scholars. See for example N. Baym, Women and the Republic: Emma Willard's rhetoric of history, *American Quarterly* 43, 1 (1991) 1–23, and M. Bruckner, Lessons in geography: maps, spellers, and other grammars of nationalism in the early republic, *American Quarterly* 51, 2 (1999) 311–343.

² Emma Willard to Miss Foster, November 5, 1848, reprinted in J. Lord, *The Life of Emma Willard*, New York, 1873, 228.

as Martin Bruckner has shown, Webster's and Morse's texts also connected literacy and geographic knowledge in subtle ways. In one exercise, Webster arranged the names of the original thirteen states and Maine geographically, from top to bottom (north to south) on the page, thus visually reinforcing spatial relationships in the new nation. Morse extended this connection between alphabetic and cartographic literacy by using 'word maps' in his texts; nations were marked on a page by name only, but arranged according to geographical relationships. Through these and other techniques, Morse and Webster embedded the nation as a concept into the very structure of elementary knowledge.³

Born just after the Revolution, Willard came to maturity when questions of national identity were not simply matters of loyalty or preference, but of the country's very existence. She received intense training in the classics and British literature, but the texts that resonated with her most were Webster's grammar and Morse's geography.⁴ She mastered all of her lessons with discipline, and recalled decades later her ability to meet the instructor's demands that she memorize the material by rote. Her precociousness earned her a position teaching at a local school in her late teens, and her experience convinced her of the need for both curricular and pedagogical reform.

Willard's dissatisfaction with existing teaching methods was exacerbated by the limitations placed on female students. Indeed, she attributed the inadequacy of her own education to the poor quality of teachers assigned to teach girls and outdated assumptions about what girls could learn. Yet geography occupied an interesting place in female education even as early as the late eighteenth century. It was widely accepted as one of the first appropriate subjects for girls, and was frequently used as a path to literacy. Indeed, John Pinkerton prefaced his modern atlas by arguing for the wide appeal of geography, 'a study so universally instructive and pleasing, that it has, for nearly a century, been taught even to females.' Both geography and map reading were understood to be non-threatening subjects that cultivated literacy as well as preparing women for 'the trivial conversations of social circle.'⁵

If geography and map reading were appropriate subjects for female study, Willard chafed at the many others that were kept out of reach, and she made her concerns clear in her widely circulated *Plan for Improving Female Education* (1819). With no public assistance and no little resistance, Willard founded the Troy Female Seminary two years later, which quickly became a pre-eminent school for future teachers, and one of the finest institutions of female education in the country. At Troy, Willard assumed that females were capable of studying the same subjects as their male counterparts, and incorporated 'masculine studies' such as science into the curriculum. Her administration of Troy, and her intensive teaching in the decade prior to and

³ Bruckner has a much more extended discussion of this relationship between alphabetic and cartographic literacy in his *Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, & National Identity*, Chapel Hill, 2006, 108–116.

⁴ Professor H. Fowler, Educational services of Mrs. Emma Willard, *American Journal of Education* 6 (March 1859) 125–168.

⁵ John Pinkerton, *A Modern Atlas from the First and Best Authorities*, Philadelphia, 1818, 3. I am grateful to Michael Robinson for this reference. On the relationship of gender to the study of maps, see P. Richards, 'Could I but Mark Out My Own Map of Life': educated women embracing cartography in the nineteenth-century American south, *Cartographica* 39, 3 (Fall 2004) 1–17.

after its foundation, convinced her of the multiple failures of contemporary pedagogy and textbooks.⁶

At the same time, she was part of a generation deeply influenced by the ideas of Johann Pestalozzi, who conceived of the child as a curious subject to be engaged rather than a blank slate to be inscribed. As Willard put it, ‘I should labor to make my pupils by explanation and illustration *understand* their subject, and get them warmed to it, by making them see its beauties and its advantages.’⁷ Although Willard had been able to master Morse’s geography lessons, she had been disappointed in its content, because he omitted maps and instead profiled locations through narrative description and reference to longitude and latitude. Willard regarded this omission as symptomatic of a larger problem in schools, ‘for though maps existed, yet they were not required to be used.’ Morse’s choice not to use maps was deliberate, part of a larger pedagogical school of thought that textual description was the best way to cultivate powers of memory.

By contrast, the influence of Pestalozzi turned early nineteenth-century educators toward mnemonics and the visual display of information, for these were considered more effective techniques of engaging children and improving memory. As early as 1821, Willard (who defined an educated student as one who could understand, remember, and then communicate) was captivated by the potential power of mnemonics. Such ideas have long been dismissed by twentieth-century educators—indeed Willard herself was often criticized by later reformers for her emphasis on rote. She did not take issue with the *goal* of memorization, but she faulted existing learning methods and therefore reformulated the *presentation* of information to students. The difference is critical. Willard believed that information presented *spatially* and *visually* would facilitate memory by attaching images to the mind through the eyes.⁸

Convinced that educators should employ mnemonics and the graphic display of information, Willard was convinced by her intense nationalism that history should occupy the center of the curriculum. She even conceptualized her intellectual contribution as a nationalistic one, recalling that there was no better way for her to serve her country than ‘by awakening a taste for history.’⁹ Yet by comparison with geography, history instruction was uncommon in the 1810s. To the extent

⁶ Quote is from Fowler, Educational services (note 4), 151. This essay does not address either the gender dimension of Willard’s work or the influence she exerted over women’s education. See M.D. Hall, Emma Willard on the political position of women, *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* 6, 2 (2000) 13–26; A.F. Scott, The ever widening circle: the diffusion of feminist values from the Troy Female Seminary 1822–1872, *History of Education Quarterly* 19 (Spring 1979), 3–25; A.F. Scott, What, then, is the American, this new woman?, *Journal of American History* 65, 3 (1978), 675–703; A. Repousis, The Trojan women: Emma Hart Willard and the Troy society for the advancement of female education in Greece, *Journal of the Early Republic* 24, 3 (Fall 2004) 445–476; and the introduction to the finding aid for *The Papers of Emma Hart Willard: 1787–1870*, written by Lucy Townsend and Barbara Wiley.

⁷ Fowler, Educational services (note 4), 134.

⁸ Willard’s early interest in mnemonics and pedagogy is apparent in her prefatory comments to Woodbridge’s *System of Ancient Geography* (1821), which was never released but available in manuscript form in *The Papers of Emma Hart Willard*, Reel 7, Frame 475. On the late century criticism of Willard’s emphasis on memorization, see J. Moreau, *Schoolbook Nation: Conflicts over American History Textbooks from the Civil War to the Present*, Ann Arbor, 2003.

⁹ E. Willard, *Guide to the Temple of Time; and Universal History for Schools*, New York, 1850, 3. Willard’s own political position is difficult to ascertain. She worshipped Clay, particularly after the Compromise of 1850. By all indications she associated with the values of the Whig Party, and in 1860 strongly supported the Constitutional Union Party in the hopes of averting secession. Her intense opposition to the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848 and the enfranchisement of women complicates our understanding of her feminist values, and these complex issues are explored more fully in Scott, What, then, is the American (note 6), and Baym, Women and the Republic (note 1).

that history was taught, it was as a means to learn reading at the primary level, or as a course on the classical or sacred past at the secondary level.

The concept of American history was doubly marginal, for the nation *had* virtually none to speak of, if history was understood in a national sense. The few histories of the new republic were generally annals of the Revolution or histories of individual colonies, such as David Ramsay's history of South Carolina. Yet Willard argued that a more fully developed *American* history was critical to the survival of the republic, and called on educators to expand their offerings in the nation's own past. This was at least as important for women as for men, for a working knowledge of American history would elevate women morally, prepare them to be republican mothers, and inoculate them against the desire for fiction, a vehicle of 'mawkish uniformity' and delusion.¹⁰

Ironically, American national history emerged earliest at those schools which were newer and less prestigious, chiefly female academies where the curriculum was less entrenched. Similarly, public schools—which were more sensitive to external pressures—also adopted the study of American history before their private counterparts. By the 1820s, five states had passed laws requiring that national history be taught at the secondary level in tax-supported institutions. In this context the Troy Seminary faced few institutional impediments to curriculum reform, and Willard easily placed subjects that she considered necessary—such as the sciences and American history—alongside more traditional studies of geography and grammar.¹¹

By the 1830s and 1840s the popularity of history had surged among Americans. The subject gained new prominence in schools alongside the rise of historical societies and archives, a growing movement for historic preservation, and a new interest in historical narrative. George Bancroft's multivolume work on the United States, together with William Hickling Prescott's history of Spain and John Lothrop Motley's *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, sparked a mania for history writing. One-third of the best-selling books of the first half of the century covered historical themes, and among authors producing the new genre of historical textbooks, the undisputed champion was Samuel Goodrich (Peter Parley), whose 170 editions sold approximately seven million copies. Goodrich's chief competitor was his brother Charles. Emma Willard, who sold about one million history textbooks from the 1820s through the 1860s, held third place. Most of these textbook authors held public office at some point in their lives, and all but Willard dropped their former professions to devote themselves to writing. As we will see, her continuing involvement in teaching had a significant influence over her maps and images.¹²

¹⁰ Willard, *Guide to the Temple of Time* (note 9), 30.

¹¹ On history in public education, see G. Callcott, *History in the United States 1800–1860*, Baltimore, 1970, 57–58. The five states requiring history instruction in the 1820s were Massachusetts, Vermont, New York, Virginia, and Rhode Island. As Kim Tolley has demonstrated, it was actually more common for girls than for boys in the antebellum period to receive instruction in the sciences; Willard was at the forefront of this trend. See Tolley, *Science for ladies, classics for gentlemen: a comparative analysis of scientific subjects in the curricula of boys' and girls' secondary schools in the United States, 1794–1850*, *History of Education* 36, 2 (Summer 1996) 129–153.

¹² Callcott, *History* (note 11), 31–32, 89–90. On the place of history generally in American culture in this period, see Callcott's *History* (note 11) as well as N. Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History, 1790–1860*, New Brunswick, 1995; D. Van Tassel, *Recording America's Past: an Interpretation of the Development of Historical Studies in America, 1607–1884*, Chicago, 1960; M. Kraus, *The Writing of American History*, Norman, 1953; E. Cheng, *American historical thought and the American revolution, 1784–1850*, Ph.D. Diss., Yale University, 1998; D. Ross, *Grand narrative in American historical writing: from romance to uncertainty*, *American Historical Review* 100 (1995) 651–677, as well as her *Historical consciousness in nineteenth century America*, *American Historical Review* 89 (1983) 909–928.

None of these historical writers was especially interested in causation—whether human or providential—but instead used romantic literary techniques to probe the past for larger social and moral truths, or to discover the essential qualities or characteristics of a given society. The romantic historians of the period envisioned historical reality as a unified whole that integrated the hand of God as well as the agency of individual men. As famously put by Lord Bolingbroke, history was ‘philosophy teaching by example.’ In the United States, this meant instilling in younger generations the heroic stories of an aging revolutionary generation. Knowledge of past events enabled students to reflect on moral lessons, which in turn inculcated virtue and strengthened the bonds of citizenship. From the perspective of the twenty-first century, this was a rigid, unapologetically didactic concept of the past.¹³

Willard was weaned on this idea of history, but her work in geography trained her to think of the past in spatial, three-dimensional terms, and also to think of the nation in terms of its occupation of space. Thus she considered geography and chronology the ‘twin axes of history,’ but was troubled by the way these subjects were taught, ‘the books of Geography being closely confined to the order of place, and those of History, as closely to that of time; by which much repetition was made necessary, and comprehensive views of topics, by comparison and classification, were debarred.’¹⁴ To her great disappointment, history textbooks—few and far between in the earliest years of the nineteenth century—engaged chronology but ignored geographical context and made no effort to visualize or illustrate change over time.¹⁵

An interest in the visual dynamics of learning and a belief in the importance of geography fed Willard’s interest in cartography. She found maps unmatched for their ability to convey complex information elegantly, and for their power to picture the nation. In the 1850s—well before the idea of a national archive was widely accepted—Willard encouraged the collection of maps of North American discovery and settlement as critical national documents.¹⁶ She was also convinced that maps could serve history by helping students gain a more three-dimensional, holistic view of the past. Maps *placed* history, and she argued that this physicality and emphasis on locality would in turn facilitate memory. All these concerns converged in Willard’s work: her commitment to female education led her to prepare women for their place in the nation, her commitment to nationalism led her to history, her commitment to history and to pedagogy led her to maps and other images that spatialized the past.

Given Willard’s intense work in history and geography, one might wonder about her contribution to historical geography. There were no research universities in early nineteenth-century America, which meant there were no professors of geography or others devoted to advancing geographical research as such. As Michael Conzen has noted, those who cultivated the relationship between geographical and historical thought in this era were primary and secondary educators,

¹³ Callcott, *History* (note 11), viii, 56.

¹⁴ Willard, *Guide to the Temple of Time* (note 9), 11. Baym suggests that Willard conceptualized the nation in spatial terms. See Baym, *Women and the Republic* (note 1), 6.

¹⁵ Her recollections of education and discussions of pedagogy can be found in the following: Willard to A.W. Holden, September 5, 1846; Willard to William Cogswell, December 21, 1841 (both available through the newly released *Papers of Emma Hart Willard: 1787–1870*; hereafter *Papers*); and Fowler, *Educational services* (note 4).

¹⁶ On the need to collect and preserve maps of the nation’s past, see *Papers*, Willard, letter to William L. Marcy, former governor of New York, September 3, 1854, Reel 3, Frame 790–794.

and Willard was first among them.¹⁷ By exploring the locational dimension of history—using maps and graphs to trace the concept of change over time—she practiced a form of historical geography. But she went beyond this. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century her teaching brought her to consider geographical relationships and problems of comparative geography. As she later recalled:

I began a series of improvements in geography—separating and first teaching what could be learned from maps—then treating the various subjects of population, extent, length of rivers, &c., by comparing country with country, river with river, and city with city,—making out with the assistance of my pupils, those tables which afterwards appeared in Woodbridge and Willard's *Geographies*.¹⁸

As historian Michael Robinson has found, Willard took many cues from Alexander von Humboldt, whose isothermal maps and concepts of comparative geography were emerging at this time. Though little noted in the scientific and popular press when they appeared in 1817, Humboldt's climatic maps, charts of comparative river lengths and mountain heights, and other images designed to convey geographical relationships were quickly incorporated into their geography textbook by Willard and her collaborator William Woodbridge. This textbook enjoyed terrific success in schools, went through multiple editions, and gave Willard the confidence to venture into other areas, including history and historical cartography.¹⁹

Inventing the American historical atlas

Benedict Anderson has stressed the critical role maps played in the rise of nationalism in Southeast Asia, and also mentioned the appearance, in the late nineteenth century, of historical maps designed to extend the nation's lineage back in time.²⁰ In the United States and Europe, the use of historical cartography to buttress the nation occurred in the early nineteenth century, yet the genre emerged slowly. When Willard was preparing her history of the United States, historical atlases were still primitive. According to Walter Goffart, the historical atlas as we understand it, with a series of maps illustrating change over time for a specific region, only emerged in the 1830s and 1840s. Prior to this, the few atlases claiming

¹⁷ Michael Conzen, 'The Historical Impulse in Geographical Writing,' in: Conzen, T. Rumney and G. Wynn (Eds). *A Scholar's Guide to Geographical Writing on the American and Canadian Past*, Chicago, 1993, 25.

¹⁸ Willard, quoted in Fowler, Educational services (note 4), 135.

¹⁹ William Woodbridge, *A System of Universal Geography on the Principles of Comparison and Classification* bound together with Emma Willard, *Ancient Geography, as Connected with Chronology, and Preparatory to the Study of Ancient History: Accompanied with an Atlas* [also known as *Woodbridge and Willard's Geography*], Hartford, CT, 1829. For Robinson, Willard and Woodbridge's prescient assimilation of Humboldt's ideas reflects a curious reversal in intellectual history: here Humboldtian ideas of nature and culture were introduced into American culture through textbook authors—and by extension schoolchildren—rather than the scientific community. Such a possibility suggests that we might rethink not just the advent of historical geography, but the production of knowledge more generally. See M. Robinson, Why we need a new history of exploration, Paper read at the 2006 Meeting of the OAH, Washington, DC.

²⁰ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, 1983, chapter 10.

to be historical were more accurately described as collections of unrelated maps. More to the point, these maps contained little geographical information, and were interspersed with charts and tables, the preferred format for graphic illustrations of history in the eighteenth century. These atlases also tended toward the ancient or biblical past, with little attention to more recent years.

In the 1830s, however, historical atlases proliferated. They also changed their focus. As Jeremy Black points out, the French Revolution—which brought upheavals not just in political organization but also to the measurement of time (the proposed alterations to the modern calendar) and space (the metric system)—underscored the rupture and distance between past and present. Yet by fueling the rise of nationalism, the Revolution also raised interest *in* the past, particularly insofar as history was now defined as the story of a particular nation. Thus the Revolution renewed interest in historical mapping. More broadly, the eighteenth century witnessed a gradual transformation from feudal to territorial forms of sovereignty, and maps were peculiarly well suited to illustrate the latter. Black goes so far as to claim that although historical mapping began with the mapping of classical history, its conceptual elaboration largely depended upon and matured with the emergence of modern historical states in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.²¹

Perhaps the most successful and important of these early atlases was the French atlas of Las Cases, printed in English as the *Genealogical, Chronological, Historical and Geographical Atlas* (1801); revised and printed in the United States by Carey and Lea in 1822.²² This enormously influential volume included fifty-three charts, tables, and maps (mostly of individual states). Yet only one map engaged historical change, and even this did so in a limited way, for it attempted to cover the English settlements in North America from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century. Most of the historical information was found in the marginal narrative, and in a ‘pantograph’ which charted historical change in a table divided along chronological and geographical lines. The atlas contained no sequential maps, nor did it map change over time; it was more a catalogue and gazetteer than anything else, one that indexed and organized material but made little attempt to illuminate the spatial or geographical dimension to history. In Goffart’s view, such an atlas was a collection of ‘maps for history’ rather than historical maps, because attention was given to tables, genealogies, and information other than historical cartography.²³ As a general rule, textbooks of American history also avoided maps. Marcius Willson—one of Willard’s rival textbook authors—complained about the state of historical maps in the United States in 1846: ‘the reader may search in vain, on modern maps, for the names of numerous places, familiar in

²¹ W. Goffart, Breaking the Ortelian pattern, in: J. Winearls (Ed.), *Editing Early and Historical Atlases*, Toronto, 1995, 60–61; J. Black, *Maps and History: Constructing Images of the Past*, New Haven, 1997, 8, 17, 25–26, 39.

²² This atlas, also known as the ‘Lesage’ atlas, has a complex history, which is ably covered in Goffart, *Historical Atlases: The First Three Hundred Years, 1570–1870*, Chicago, 2003, and Black, *Maps and History* (note 20). The American edition, copyrighted in 1820 but actually appearing in 1822, was titled *A Complete Genealogical, Historical, Chronological, and Geographical Atlas being a General Guide to History, both Ancient And Modern*. The other existing atlas claiming to cover American history was William Winterbotham’s *Historical, Geographical, Commercial, and Philosophical View of the American United States*, New York, 1795. This four volume narrative contained—like Carey and Lea’s edition of Lesage years later—a series of maps of each state in the new Union, as well as one of the United States as well. It had no sequential maps, and made no attempt to chart change over time on a map.

²³ Goffart, *Historical Atlases* (note 21), 9, 308.

history, but forgotten in modern topography, because important only in the remembrance of what they have been.’ One of the only exceptions Willson made to this generalization about poor historical cartography was the work of Emma Willard. This was praise indeed, given the strained relationship that existed between them.²⁴

Willard recalled that her history writings emerged directly from her needs as a teacher, in which role she frequently found herself using and drawing maps to help her students envision the past. Over time her work gained a wider audience, and she arranged to publish an American history that would emphasize geography. The result was her most enduring textbook, reprinted almost every year from 1828 through the 1860s. Willard’s *History of the United States, or The Republic of America* begins by placing history in both a chronological and a geographical context in order to ‘situate’ it in the student’s mind. In both the textbook and her private correspondence, Willard emphasized her discovery of a more thorough and modern form of pedagogy that would advance memory, and by extension American civic education. Indeed, she claimed, her history text was so revolutionary that it could be used to teach geography as well as history. What few had explicitly recognized, she wrote, was the reciprocal relationship between the two subjects:

Indeed, were I required to devise a plan for the mere purpose of bringing a pupil to the best possible knowledge of the geography of the United States, both as to particularity and permanency of association, this plan of studying it, in connexion with the history, is the very one which I should propose; for the event fixes the recollection of the place, no less than the place of the event.²⁵

To be sure, Jedediah Morse and Noah Webster had earlier drawn on geographical concepts to advance literacy. But Willard was the first to draw so extensively on the visual, graphic, and cartographic dimension of geography to advance history and nationhood. To this end she designed a series of maps to accompany the *History*, and this collection constitutes one of the first attempts to illustrate the nation’s history through cartography. Given Willard’s preoccupation with nationalism, history, geography, and pedagogy, perhaps it is unsurprising that she published an atlas of American history in 1828. Authoring geography textbooks surely encouraged her to see the nation in spatial terms, but the achievement is particularly notable for the fact that she had no formal training in cartography.²⁶

The framework and logic of this atlas is the key to its power and importance. Willard arranged a chronological sequence of about a dozen maps (the 1831 edition contains slight variations), each of which depicted roughly the same area—that which would *become* the United States—at

²⁴ M. Willson, *Report on American Histories*, New York, 1847, 3–4. The author went on to praise Willard as one of the only authors to include historical material in textbook maps.

²⁵ *American Journal of Education* (1828) 675.

²⁶ The role of women in the production of historical narratives is an interesting problem. Sharon Harris outlines the limited access of woman writers of history, thereby stressing the exceptional achievement their work represented. Nina Baym, however, has shown that women’s historical narratives were relatively common in the early nineteenth century, especially when one considers historical themes appearing in other genres, such as poetry and fiction. See Harris, *Women’s Early American Historical Narratives*, New York, 2003 and Baym, *American Women Writers and the Work of History* (note 12).

a different moment in the past.²⁷ Each documented an event or traced a movement that led toward, or resulted from, the creation of the nation: the landing on Plymouth Rock, the creation of the New England Confederacy, the Charter of Massachusetts, the settlement of Georgia, the Peace of Paris, the Revolutionary War, and the War of 1812. This ‘series of progressive maps’ became a cumulative statement of nationhood, as each moment of the past was chosen for its place in an evolving story of territorial fulfillment. The very structure of cartography simplified a contingent story of struggle to realize the nation, dramatized further by Willard’s exuberant nationalism. From the vantage point of 1828, the atlas projected territorial coherence back over two and a half centuries. While this may seem axiomatic to our own nationalist sensibility, at the time it was a conscious—even audacious—choice to read political sovereignty and national legitimacy back in time. In Willard’s mind, historical cartography was implicitly national.²⁸

Consider some of the maps in the atlas. Though arranged in a chronological sequence, the atlas began not with a ‘first’ but rather an ‘introductory’ map, which charted ‘aboriginal wandering’ in what would much later become the eastern half of the United States [Fig. 1]. This both reflected and reinforced the existing assumption that Native Americans existed in a timeless space prior to the advent of human history.²⁹ For someone like Willard who was deeply interested in human chronology, the choice to begin with this map was an auspicious decision. This introductory map extended further west than any of the subsequent maps, encompassing (perhaps even claiming) territory that would be acquired in Willard’s own lifetime, centuries after this aboriginal wandering. The next map in the series—which she designated the ‘first’—was far more circumscribed, shrinking back to the eastern seaboard. Yet here Willard reached back decades beyond the time and place of America’s typical originating moment at Jamestown in order to locate the earlier failed settlements of Gilbert and Raleigh in the sixteenth century [Fig. 2]. As detailed on the map’s inset, Gilbert’s was ‘The First patent granted by an English Sovereign to lands within The territory of the United States.’ Even though these voyages left no legacy, they merited a map in this

²⁷ Emma Willard, *A Series of Maps to Accompany Willard’s History of the United States*, New York, 1828. Information on the origin of this series of maps is scarce. The engraver, Samuel Maverick, is one whose work, if it appears at all elsewhere, is uncredited, and therefore little can be said about the degree to which this was Maverick or Willard’s enterprise. An earlier series of maps for her *Geography for Beginners* were conceived by Willard but appears to have been drawn for the engraver’s execution by one of her former students. Unfortunately the maps were destroyed by fire after the first printing. Their engraved quality would probably, however, have placed them out of reach of most potential readers and students. In subsequent editions of Willard’s United States history, the maps were vastly simplified, reduced, and included in the pages of the text itself. According to Nina Baym, Willard was actually one of the first textbook writers to include maps. See Baym, *Women and the Republic* (note 1). This seems corroborated by Marcius Willson’s report on school histories, 3–4.

²⁸ E. Willard, *A Series of Maps to Willard’s History of the United States, or, Republic of America*, New York, 1828. Jeremy Black has noted that nineteenth-century European historical atlases also projected political sovereignty backward by assuming the importance of political boundaries earlier in time. See Black, *Maps and History* (note 20), 54–57.

²⁹ Steve Conn has explored the relationship between archaeology and history in *History’s Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century*, Chicago, 2004. According to Conn, while in Europe archaeology helped extend history (and thereby national legitimacy) back in time, in the United States the same opportunity to give the nation chronological depth through the history of Native Americans was passed over in favor of removing them from the realm of history to that of anthropology.

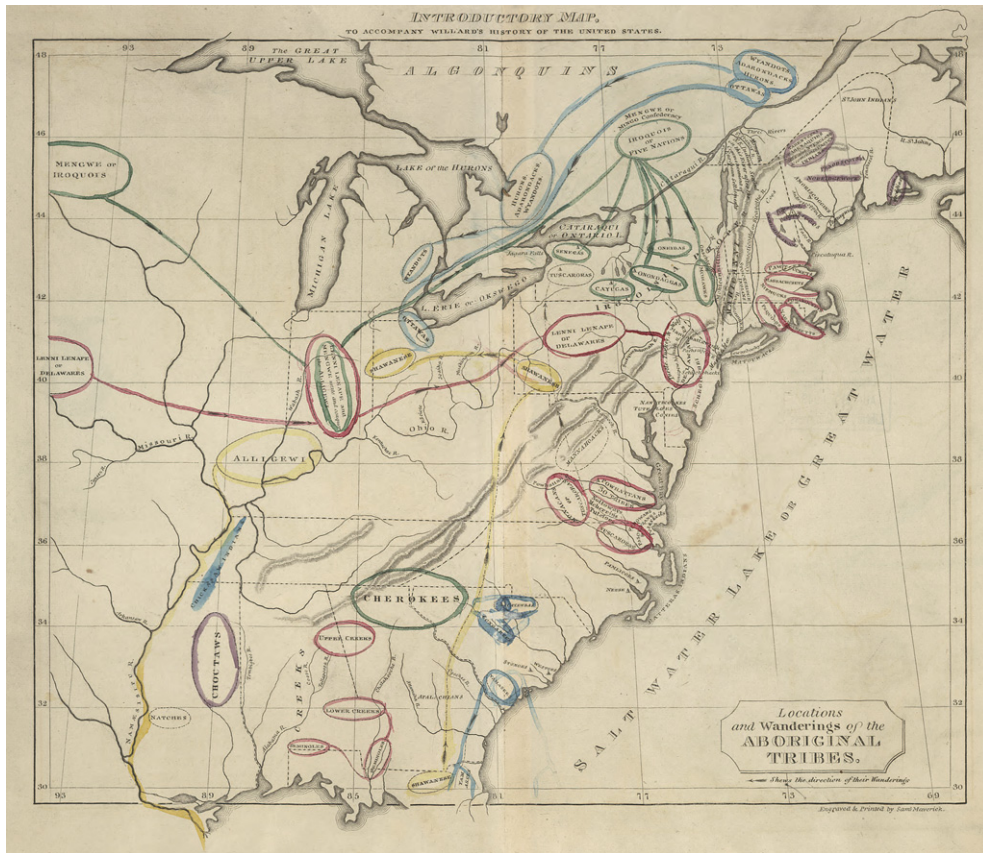


Fig. 1. This 'introductory' map to Willard's *Series of Maps* laid out for readers the backstory of American history, and also notably attempted to illustrate movement on a map. Source: E. Willard, *A Series of Maps to Willard's History of the United States, or, Republic of America* (New York: White, Gallaher and White, 1828).

national history because they *anticipated* later Anglo-American developments. By the same logic, the settlement and movement patterns of Native Americans, despite their long presence in the territory that would become the heart of the United States, was separated out into an introductory—rather than a first—map because they did not anticipate the nation's trajectory.³⁰

³⁰ Some of these—such as the maps of Native American migration and the Revolutionary War—are especially interesting because they attempt to show change over time. The Revolutionary War map collapsed ten years of history, and the Native American map represented far longer periods of dynamic change. On another note, for someone so interested in the territorial dimension of history, it is curious that Willard gave little attention to the Louisiana Purchase. It appears only briefly in her 1860 edition, and makes its first serious appearance only with the Missouri Compromise of 1820, when the question of slavery brought the territory into political contention. In this respect, however, she was typical: few other textbooks foregrounded either Lewis and Clark or the significance of the Louisiana Purchase. The journals of Lewis and Clark were essentially 'rediscovered' after the Civil War, then given particularly close attention after the centennial celebration of the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair. Particularly interesting is the way that events that figure only minorly into our own version of the national story—such as the War of 1812, or the visits of Kossuth, Koszta, and Lafayette—were critical to Willard and her contemporaries.

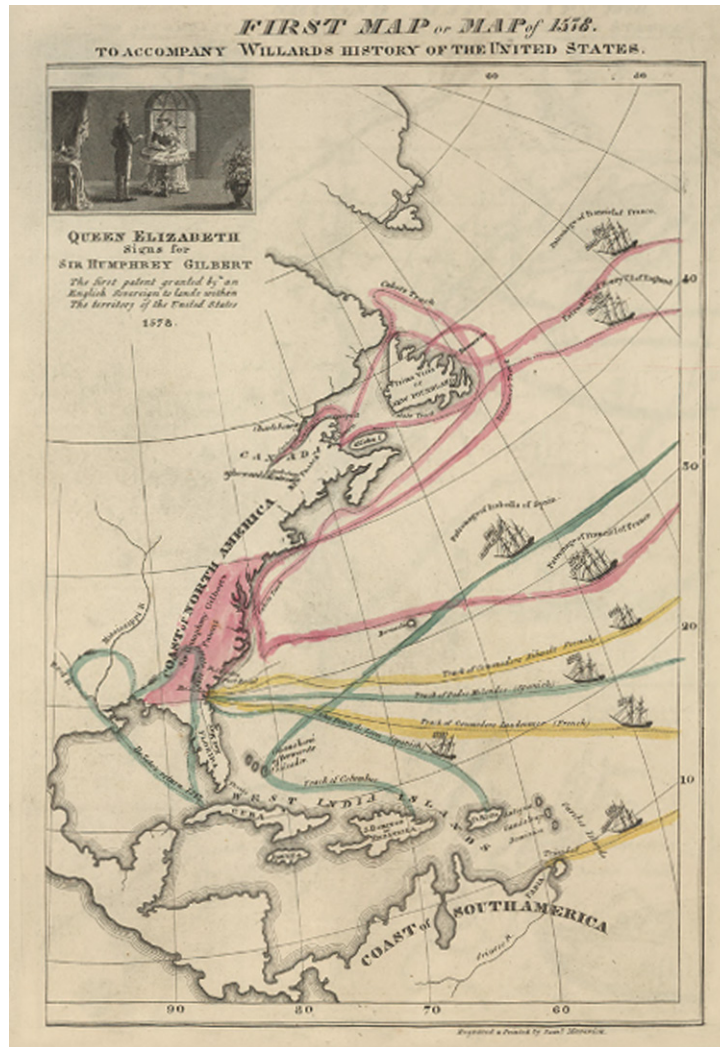


Fig. 2. The 'first' map of Willard's *Series*, which marked the failed voyages of early Englishmen; the fact of their failure was secondary to their symbolic importance as anticipating later successes, and the general trajectory of colonial development. Source: E. Willard, *A Series of Maps to Willard's History of the United States, or, Republic of America* (New York: White, Gallaher and White, 1828).

In this 'first map' Willard also projected time forward by highlighting the imperial European interests of countries across the Atlantic Ocean, countries that would later vie with one another for control of North America. Schoolchildren paging through the maps could not have missed the cumulative story of national growth and settlement. On each page the story grew clearer, and the outlines of the nation more familiar, until students arrived at the map of the present day, 1826. Information about the continent became progressively more detailed, and the territory more settled. In this atlas, over three centuries of change were concentrated into a handful of maps.

Walter Goffart indicates that Willard's atlas was one of the last to employ this sequential mapping structure, but it was the *first* to do so for the American national past, and for American schoolchildren. Marcius Willson conceded that Willard's conceptual arrangement for American history was unprecedented. Yet he criticized her maps as insufficiently geographical insofar as they contained little topographical material and instead focused on the location of human events and boundaries.³¹ But perhaps this *was* the point: Willard's maps were more *historical* than geographical because her goal was to create an interactive aid for American history, a mnemonic exercise that would re-conceptualize the past on a plane rather than in a narrative. At the same time and by virtue of their scale and her choice of events, Willard's maps privileged information that portrayed national coherence and unity, and correspondingly erased local and regional identities that would become so important as a counterweight to national consolidation in the nineteenth century.³² Most important, these maps buttressed the nation by providing a visual backstory to its modern incarnation. In tracing the sources of contemporary America, Willard actually advanced—if inadvertently—an approach to the past that explained change over time, even as an interest in causation was just beginning to emerge in the early nineteenth century.

Significantly, Willard designed both the history text and the atlas in the ebullient aftermath of the War of 1812, and her work won great acclaim. The history was revised and reprinted repeatedly over the next four decades, and though the map plates were reportedly destroyed in a fire, simplified versions were drawn and incorporated into subsequent editions. Lydia Sigourney, a respected poet and one of Willard's closest correspondents, extolled the history and the atlas. She was particularly proud that a fellow American—and a 'country-woman' at that—had produced a work not just of competence and logic but also sentiment and filial piety. Another review praised Willard's interest in mnemonics and her selective rather than exhaustive rendering of history.³³

From maps of space to charts of time

The correspondence between Willard and her publishers reveals stiff competition among history and geography textbook authors during the Jacksonian era. Not surprisingly, her publishers encouraged her to differentiate her work with visual material.³⁴ This turn toward the visual was fueled further by Willard's own sense that time itself had accelerated. She thrilled at the new pace of life brought by the advent of steam, and urged colleagues to consider the implications of this

³¹ M. Willson, *A Reply to Mrs. Willard's 'Appeal,' as lately published by A.S. Barnes & co.*, New York, 1847. A few years later, Willard created an atlas to supplement her *Universal History*. In this case, she used a series of maps with billowing clouds to represent the growing knowledge of the world through discovery. This owed its conception and execution to the work of Edward Quin, whose posthumously published historical atlas is covered well in Goffart's, *Breaking the Ortelian pattern* (note 20), and Goffart, *Historical Atlases* (note 21). Emma Willard, *A System of Universal History, in Perspective: Accompanied by an Atlas, Exhibiting Chronology in a Picture of Nations, and Progressive Geography in a Series of Maps*, Hartford, 1835.

³² On the relationship between regional and national identities in the early republic, see D. Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: the Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1997.

³³ Lydia Sigourney to Emma Willard, October 1828, *Papers*, Reel 1, Frame 639. Another review can be found in *History of the United States or Republic of America, American Journal of Education* 3 (1828) 672–680.

³⁴ See for example O.D. Cooke to Emma Willard, June 8, 1830, *Papers*, Reel 2, Frame 40.

for education. In her mind, it required the creation of a more *efficient* method of learning. Her interest in the work of Pestalozzi led her to conceptualize the student as a curious individual whose interest was to be engaged.³⁵ Thus Willard was in part drawn to cartography in the 1820s and 1830s for its ability to convey complex historical information in a visual manner. But by the end of that period she began to recognize that historical maps—as then drawn—were only partially capable of expressing change over time. Simply put, Willard wanted more than maps could (then) offer. While she continued to use maps extensively, she began to think of alternative ways of organizing information. As always, her aim was the cultivation of memory:

Geography, then, I dissected, and remodelled, according to those laws of mind concerned in acquiring and retaining knowledge. I divided it into two parts: first, that which could be acquired from maps; and second, that which could not;—and for the first, giving my pupils to study nothing but maps and questions on maps. In the remaining part of the science, being no longer bound to any order of place, for no confusion of mind could arise concerning locations after these had been first learned from maps, I was free to expatiate by topics, and give general comparative views, of population, altitude of mountains, length of rivers, &c; and philosophic or general views could now be given of government, religion, commerce, manufactures, and productions.³⁶

Following this dictum, Willard created a series of what she termed ‘chronographers,’ or graphic measurements of time. In part she was encouraged by the general trend in cartography. As the age of discovery waned, cartographers moved away from a preoccupation with exploration and precision toward an interest in the organization of information. For instance, what would later be termed thematic cartography—mapping particular phenomenon in space, such as the distribution of disease or crime in a given population—dates back to the eighteenth century but only became common in Europe in the 1830s and 1840s. Thematic cartography matured in the United States slightly later, and reached its fullest expression in Francis Amasa Walker’s *Statistical Atlas of the Ninth Census* in 1874. That both historical and thematic cartography developed so rapidly in the nineteenth century—alongside charts of time, graphs, timelines, and other visual illustrations of information explored below—reflects the interest of Willard and her predecessors in new ways of presenting information that might, as William Playfair put it, ‘speak to the eyes.’³⁷

³⁵ On the quickening pace of life and corresponding need for pedagogical reform, see Willard to Jane Hart, March 10, 1848, *Papers*, Reel 3, Frame 280; Willard, *Guide to the Temple of Time* (note 9), 4; and Willard to Holden, September 5, 1846, *Papers*, Reel 3, Frame 117.

³⁶ Willard, *Guide to the Temple of Time* (note 9), 11.

³⁷ The first thematic maps (found in France) emerged in the early years of the century, and attempted to map—and therefore explain—the incidence of crime, illiteracy, and disease. In a sense, Willard’s atlas and historical cartography also mapped a particular type of information—that from a moment in time, but it is unclear what larger relationship exists between these two genres. At the very least, that both modern historical and thematic cartography emerged in the early decades of the nineteenth century suggests intense interest in the spatial organization and presentation of information. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that just as non-cartographers (political economists) created the first thematic maps, so too did a non-cartographer (Willard) create first historical atlas of United States.

The best work on the emergence of thematic cartography has been done by Jeremy Crampton, for example, GIS and geographic governance: reconstructing the choropleth map, *Cartographica* 39, 1 (2004) 41–53. On the relationship of the census to statistical mapping, see M. Anderson, *The American Census: A Social History*, New Haven, 1980, 63–68.

One of the first attempts to represent time as a map represents space was made by the French physician Jacques Berneu-Dubourg. Like so many who came after him, Dubourg spoke of chronology and geography as the ‘eyes’ of history, and hoped that the visual elements of the latter would enliven the dry, factual character of the former. To this end his *Carte Chronographique* (1753) charted the life span of individuals on a chronological grid. The *carte* reflects a firm enlightenment sensibility, especially the assumption that history could be plotted and measured against an absolute scale of time.³⁸ Though celebrated by contemporaries, Dubourg’s *carte* was soon eclipsed by the work of Joseph Priestley, whose *Chart of Biography* (1765) is widely but mistakenly assumed to be the first representation of human beings as lines on a sheet of paper. Priestley drew from calendars, chronologies, and geographies to chart 2000 lives between 1200 BC and 1750 AD, accompanied by an index with dates. Though timelines now appear so familiar as to be almost intuitive, they were sufficiently unfamiliar to Priestley’s contemporaries that they required explanation.

the abstract idea of TIME, though it be not the object of any of our senses, and no image can properly be made of it, yet because it has a relation to quantity, and we can say a *greater* or *less* space of time, it admits of a natural and easy representation in our minds by the idea of a measurable space, and particularly that of a LINE; which, like time, may be extended in length, without giving any idea of breadth or thickness. And thus a longer or a shorter space of time may be most commodiously and advantageously represented by a longer or a shorter line.

Like Dubourg, Priestley believed that visual depictions of time could be learned more quickly and easily than narrative history or traditional chronologies.

The capital use of any chart of this kind, that is, a most excellent mechanical help to the knowledge of history, impressing the imagination indelibly with a just image of the rise, progress, extent, duration and contemporary state of all the considerable empires that have ever existed in the world. If a person carries his eye horizontally, he sees, in a very short time, all the revolutions that have taken place in any particular country, and under whose power it is at present; and this is done with more exactness, and in much less time, than it could have been by reading. I should not hesitate to say, that a more perfect knowledge of this kind of history may be gained by an hour’s inspection of this chart, than could be acquired by the reading of several weeks.³⁹

Priestley’s enthusiasm for the potential of chronographers to simplify learning—especially the efficiency of learning by exploiting the power of images—was shared by Willard. But while Willard acknowledged Priestley’s work, she found that it failed to convey *perspective*, or to signify

³⁸ S. Ferguson, The 1753 *Carte chronographique* of Jacques Barbeu-Dubourg, *Princeton University Library Chronicle* LII (Winter 1991) 190–230.

³⁹ J. Priestley, *A Description of a System of Biography: with a Catalogue of All the Names Inserted in it, and the Dates Annexed to Them*, Philadelphia, 1803, and *A Description of a New Chart of History, Containing, a View of the Principal Revolutions of Empire, That Have Taken Place in the World*, London, 1769, and first published in the United States in 1792. Priestley’s explanation is quoted in D. Headrick, *When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1700–1850*, New York, 2000, 124.

the most important individuals, events, eras, or civilizations. In other words, Priestley's device gave little sense of the *dimensionality* of time.⁴⁰

Published in her *Universal History* (1835), Willard's first chronographer, or picture of time, integrated human history on a single chart⁴¹ [Figs. 3 and 4]. The chronographer appeared as an angled pyramid, with divine creation placed at the apex and time moving toward the viewer as the pyramid widened. Thus ancient history receded in importance while modern history appeared closer and in more detail. In the corner of the chart Willard explained the logic of her design:

That events apparently diminish when viewed through the vista of departed years is [a] matter of common place remark. Applying the principle to a practical purpose, we have here brought before the eye, at one glance, a sketch of the whole complicated subject of Universal History. Names of nations and a few distinguished individuals are found in the Ancient; of the most distinguished sovereigns in the Middle; and of all the sovereigns of the principal kingdoms in Modern History.⁴²

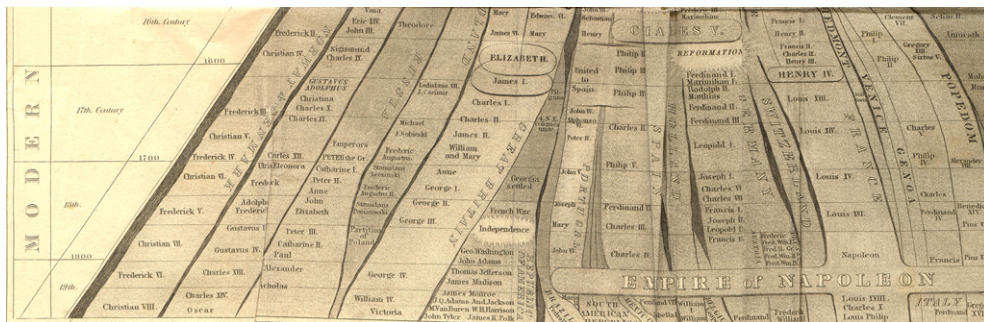
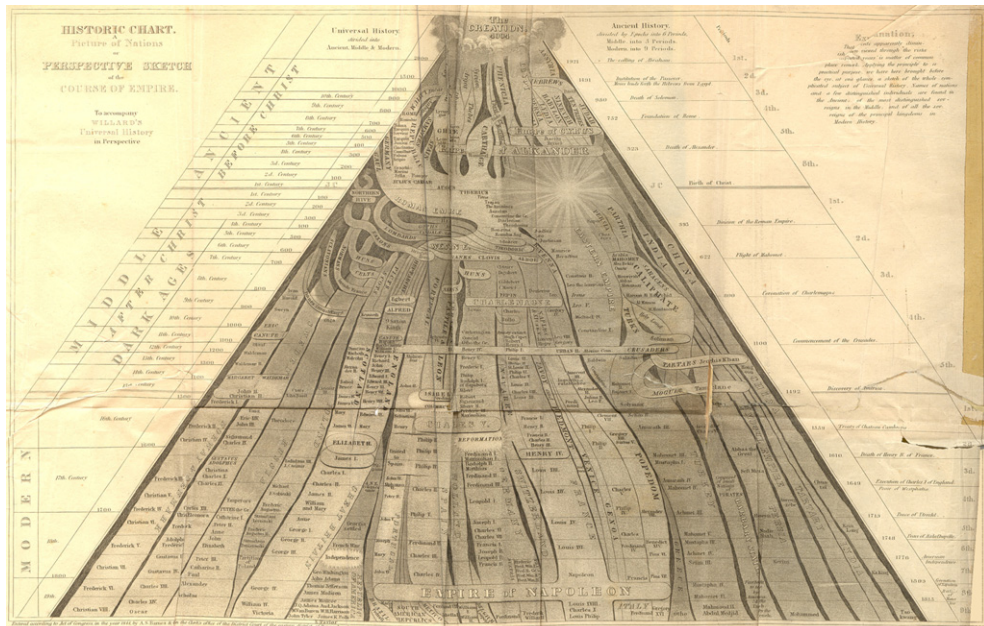
Willard divided history into three epochs: the birth of Christ separated Ancient from Middle History, while the discovery of America separated Middle from Modern History. At first glance, the chart appears to be a biological drawing or a river, metaphors that would have pleased Willard for their organic, vital connotations. Her goal was to address history to sight: the chronographer was 'an invention by which time is measured by space, and all time since the creation of the world is indicated at once to the eye.' By continued study, students would have in their minds a fixed and total image of the past, so that any mention of a particular moment, civilization, or individual could be contextualized. Hence her shorthand term for the chronographer, the 'map of time.' In fact, the chronographer abstracts space and reorganizes geography: civilizations are situated not according to their physical location but rather according to their contributions and relation to other groups in terms of ethnic or national identity, religion, or imperial association. This allowed students to trace the 'ancestry of nations,' seeing the origin of ideas, racial characteristics, and culture.⁴³

⁴⁰ David Ramsay's *Historical and Biographical Chart* (1810–1812) is also worth noting. Though little covered and with an unclear influence upon publication, it also attempted to graphically relate the historical development of the colonies into states. Ramsay, like Priestley, Willard, and others, stressed the use of these graphical forms to attach information through the 'medium of the eye.' See R. Brunhouse, David Ramsay, 1749–1815: selections from his writings, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, 55, 4 (1965) 1–250.

⁴¹ 'Universal history' became a general term in the early nineteenth century for world history and western civilization, but also invoked the philosophy of history and new ideas about the stages of civilization George Callcott estimates that one-third of historical articles in *Poole's* index from 1800 to 1860 dealt with a mix of philosophy and universal history.

⁴² Emma Willard, *Willard's Map of Time; a Companion to the Historic Guide*, New York, 1846.

⁴³ 'Map of time' is from Willard, *Guide to the Temple of Time* (note 9), 15. The stream of time also attempted to depict the relationship *between* civilizations: some relationships were permeable, while other civilizations—such as China—were demarcated by a firm line which separated them from neighboring societies. Daniel Calhoun has remarked that the universal chronographer was too complicated to be successful, and explains the failure of others to replicate or imitate her methods. See Calhoun, *Eyes for the Jacksonian world: William C. Woodbridge and Emma Willard*, *Journal of the Early Republic* 4 (Spring 1984) 20. Edward Tufte has investigated the general enterprise of graphic information but does not discuss Willard's images. See Tufte, *Envisioning Information*, Cheshire, CT, 1990, and *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*, Cheshire, CT, 2001.



Figs. 3 and 4. Willard designed this 'map of time' to convey to students the interdependence and totality of human history. The second image is a detail of the first. Source: Emma Willard, *Willard's Map of Time; a Companion to the Historic Guide* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1846).

No scholarly attention has been paid to Willard's chronographers. Although in some respects they are derivative of Priestley and other eighteenth-century timelines, they also anticipate the slow and fitful reorientation of Americans toward historicism over the course of the nineteenth century. By 'historicism' I mean—after Dorothy Ross—a new and revolutionary understanding of the past as both separate from but also causally connected to the present. As Ross explains, eighteenth-century ideas of progress were generally considered a function of a divine millennial plan rather than a result of human action. In the nineteenth century, history gradually began to displace philosophy and religion as an explanatory scheme for the human condition and situation. It is important to be careful here, particularly in tracing the rise of historicism in American intellectual life. Ross argues that historicist thought in the United States was retarded by the continuing power of exceptionalism, especially in the towering work of Bancroft. His belief that

America had transcended the march of historical time afflicting Europe was a powerful obstacle to more nuanced and critical appraisals of the past. Furthermore, Willard was not an original philosopher of history, and contradictions exist within her approach; she happily invoked providence in history even as she emphasized the agency of humans, and she was not particularly curious about causation (nor, to be fair, were her contemporaries). Yet the orientation of her chronographers is significant. Time flows forward and widens toward the viewer, as opposed to a timeline's trajectory across the page in fixed increments. Willard recognized the importance of the classical past, but emphasized recent history, where one could actively search for the origins of the modern era, particularly the rise of the American nation. Her framework suggests distance from the ancients and a view of the recent past as actually encompassing the present. This entailed an implicit shift from a view of history that delivered moral lessons from the ancients to one that derived nationalist lessons from the recent past.⁴⁴

Reviews of Willard's chronographer were positive, and a few years later she embellished it further.⁴⁵ Influenced by the Greek revival in architecture, she erected over the stream of time a temple with doric columns and a vast interior ceiling [Figs. 5 and 6]. There was more than one purpose to this modification. Willard used the temple to magnify perspective through a visual convention. Centuries—represented by pillars—diminished in size as they receded in time, which turned the viewer's attention toward recent history. The division of time into centuries was itself symbolic, as she explained to students and teachers that 'All civilized nations divide *historic time* into periods of a hundred years each, called *centuries*.'⁴⁶ But she also intended the 'Temple of Time' to approximate cartography; that is, to coordinate space and time as a map coordinates longitude and latitude. The ceiling of the temple would be filled in 'with the names of those great men who are to history, as cities are to geography, its luminous points,' while the floorwork would detail the aggregate progress of nations.⁴⁷ Individuals could be placed on the chronographer just as cities were plotted on a map. And if the entire schema seemed contrived, Willard reminded them of cartography's basic conceit.

In a map, great countries made up of plains, mountains, seas, and rivers, are represented by what is altogether unlike them; viz., lines, shades, and letters, on a flat piece of paper; but the divisions of the map enable the mind to comprehend, by proportional space and distance, what is the comparative size of each, and how countries are situated with respect to each other. So this picture made on paper, called a Temple of Time, though unlike duration, represents it by proportional space. It is as scientific and intelligible, to represent time by space, as it is to represent space by space.

Willard was so convinced that she had perfected the Temple that she claimed it might even be an *improvement* on cartography.⁴⁸

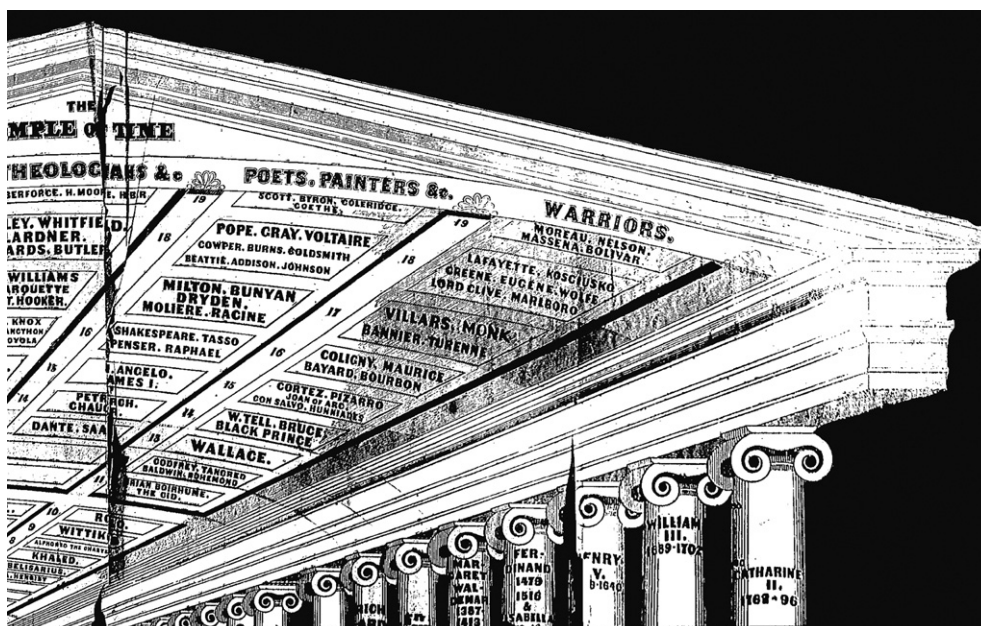
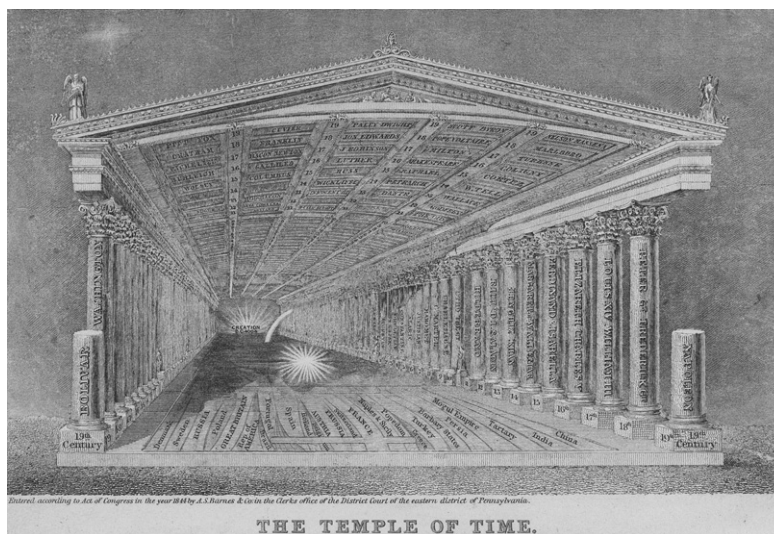
⁴⁴ Callcott, *History* (note 11), chapter 1; Ross, *Historical consciousness* (note 12).

⁴⁵ Positive reviews of her chronographer can be found in Fowler, *Educational services* (note 4), 150.

⁴⁶ Willard, *Guide to the Temple of Time* (note 9), 16.

⁴⁷ Notices of books: a system of universal history, in perspective, *American Annals of Education* 6, 1 (January 1836) 40–41, as well as Literary notices: a system of universal history, in perspective, *American Ladies Magazine* 9 (July 1836) 422–423. Willard, *Guide to the Temple of Time* (note 9), 12–13, 16.

⁴⁸ Willard, *Guide to the Temple of Time* (note 9), 21–22.



Figs. 5 and 6. Willard's first 'Temple of Time' tried to coordinate space, time, and individual lives in new ways on a graph. The ceiling contains names of important individuals in world history, while the pillars represent centuries, and the floorwork is her 'map of time' found in Fig. 3. Source: E. Willard, *Guide to the Temple of Time*; and *Universal History for Schools* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, 1850).

Like a map, the temple could focus on a particular period or nation. She confidently followed up her universal chronographer with one devoted to the United States, which was included in nearly all subsequent editions of the *Republic of America* [Fig. 7]. The 'American Temple of Time' came at a portentous moment in the nation's territorial history. Conceived in the 1840s, coincident with the acquisition of western lands in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the

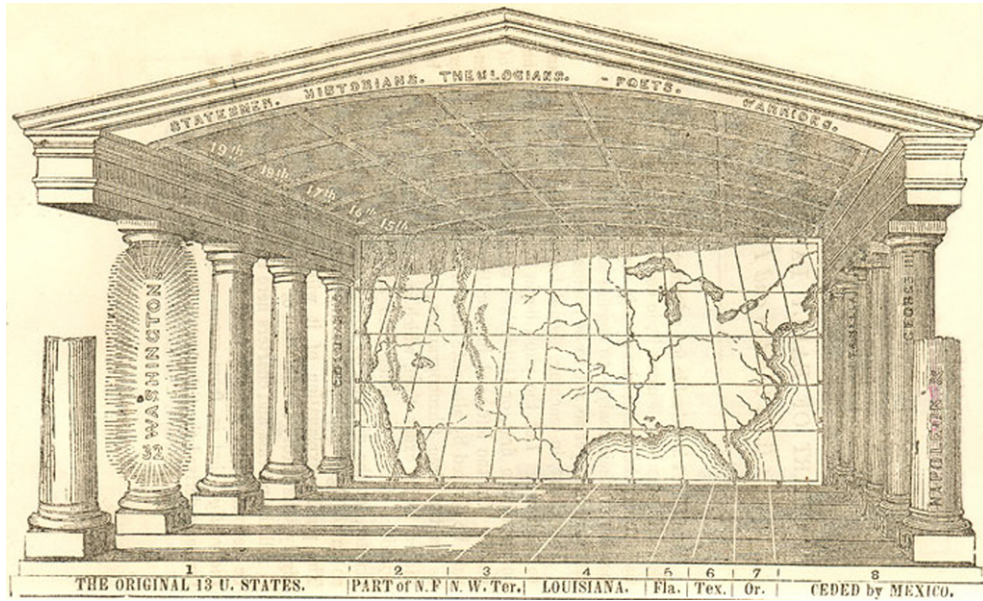


Fig. 7. Willard's 'American Temple of Time' encouraged students to 'draw history' by coordinating the nation's spatial history in the floorwork with chronological sequence through the pillars, and finally illustrious individuals in the ceiling. *Source*: E. Willard, *Abridged History of the United States, or Republic of America* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1860).

compromise with Britain, the American temple was Willard's way of conceptualizing—historically and spatially—a nation unfolding before her eyes. She adamantly supported the war against Mexico, and wrote enthusiastically of the nation's territorial expansion in the 1849 addendum to her national history textbook, *Last Leaves of American History*.⁴⁹ The concept of the American Temple of Time was to again give students a 'picture of time' that they could assimilate and reproduce. And the brief history of America gave her the opportunity to coordinate further the chronology of the temple with the geography of the floorwork. She asked students to draw eight unequal divisions upon the floorwork to correspond with her eight pieces of American historical geography used in her textbook: the original thirteen colonies, New France, the Northwest Territory, Louisiana, Florida, Texas, Oregon, and the area ceded by Mexico. Students were then directed to find a place for each state and territory in the union by shading its existence in the proper chronological area (shading the colonies as they were settled, and the states as they joined the union). If the Temple were drawn large enough, there would also be sufficient floor space to mark important battles which figured into a particular state's past. The design is complex and unwieldy, but the goal is intriguing: an integration of time and space that forced students to acquire both general and particular knowledge of their national past.⁵⁰ Such 'perspective chronographers'

⁴⁹ E. Willard, *Last Leaves of American History, Comprising Histories of the Mexican War and California*, New York, 1849.

⁵⁰ On the influence of Greek history and politics on American culture in the antebellum era, see C. Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780–1910*, Baltimore, 2002, especially chapter 2.

conveyed both the rhythms of the past and an understanding of the increasing importance of more recent history. To balance these, Willard created what she termed a ‘logical’ chronographer in the shape of a tree [Fig. 8]. Trees had long been used to embody genealogy, and time had frequently been rendered through images such as Father Time, the muse of Clio, or the wheel of time. As Michael Kammen has noted, the use of a tree to *symbolize* time in painting was especially common in the nineteenth century.⁵¹ But Willard took a different approach in using the tree to *chart* the nation’s history. She took great pride in this illustration, and used it to introduce nearly all subsequent editions of her textbook. The tree was ‘logical’ insofar as it divided time according to an absolute rather than a relative framework. The tree’s branches made up the whole of American history, which Willard divided first according to centuries (the outermost arcs), then according to ‘parts’ which were in turn divided into periods.

The tree was intended to be used alongside the temple, so that students could move between the two and plot on each the individuals and the events they discovered in the narrative. The tree charted the stages of national history. Significantly Willard arranged the branches of the tree to join, in ways impossible in nature, at critical moments in the American past. Such deliberate placement subtly enhanced the continuity of the nation’s history. Furthermore, Willard’s experience of the fluidity of the recent past appeared in her revisions to the image. In the 1844 edition, President Harrison’s death appeared as the last branch on the tree, and Harrison was the only individual marked on the chart. By 1864 Willard had replaced the Harrison branch with new branches marking the end of the Mexican War and the Compromise of 1850. Even though the Civil War was well underway when this edition went to press, Willard marked the last branch ‘1860.’ Her narrative brought American history to Fort Sumter in 1861 but no further.⁵²

Conclusion

Later educators, eager to earn their own progressive credentials, distanced themselves from previous generations by slighting Willard’s textbooks and criticizing her emphasis on rote. But if her pedagogical techniques have not endured, her ‘view’ of the nation was one of the first to so closely associate geography and history. As Nina Baym has noticed, Willard was gripped by a territorial

⁵¹ M. Kammen, *Meadows of Memory: Images of Time and Tradition in American Art and Culture*, Austin, 1992, chapter 3. The use of trees to depict historical and social or cosmological relationships in the early modern period has been treated by Frances Yates in *The Art of Memory*, Chicago, 1966, 186–187, and the use of arboreal imagery as mnemonic devices in Native American culture has also been mentioned by Peter Nabokov, *A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History*, Cambridge, 2002, vii–viii.

⁵² See for example letter of A.S. Barnes to Willard, October 25, 1866, encouraging her to avoid detailed discussion of the Civil War until the Union was restored. *Papers*, Reel 4, Frame 669. Willard’s publisher hoped images such as the tree and temple would widen the audience for her textbooks, and indeed contemporary reviews suggest that the visuals gained her work wider appeal than it might otherwise have had. See for example the Barnes to Willard, May 9, 1845, *Papers*, Reel 3, Frame 1. A letter from Barnes in December 2, 1863 carried letterhead extolling Willard’s work as the standard in the field of school history. Reviews include William Hunt, Mrs. Emma Willard, *Leaves from the American Biographical Sketchbook*, Albany, 1848, 224–231. Lydia Sigourney was especially interested in Willard’s sheer originality in the images of history. See Sigourney to Willard, December 20, 1844 and December 16, 1859, *Papers*, Reel 2, Frame 1071 and Reel 4, Frame 137.

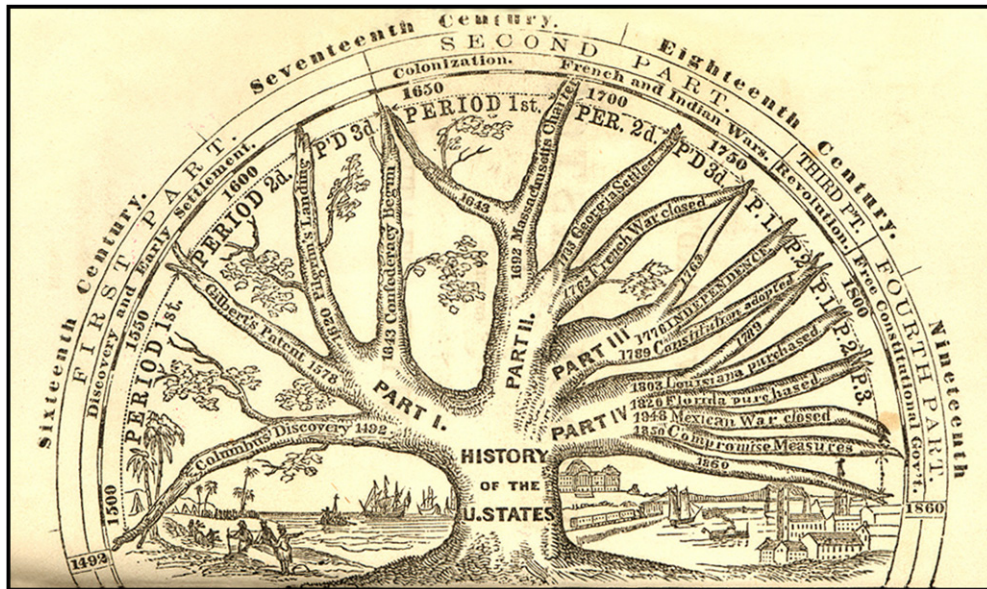


Fig. 8. Willard's 'Tree of History' or 'logical chronographer' suggested the unity of United States history, despite the present crisis of secession, which is barely acknowledged. Source: E. Willard, *Abridged History of the United States, or Republic of America* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1860).

definition of history; in fact she was among the first to define and write the nation's history primarily in territorial and spatial terms. In light of this, it should come as no surprise that she was unambivalent about the nation's assertive expansion and relatively unreflective about its costs. Instead, she thrilled at the American engagements in the Mexican War and narrated them in minute detail.

This aggressive nationalism found expression primarily in an insistent depiction of the territory itself through images that allowed students to 'plot' the past on a spatial plane. Willard was adamant about incorporating traditional cartography into her histories and geographies, but she also thought about *reconceptualizing* time and space. This begs the question of how others were beginning to narrate history and geography in the nineteenth century. Intellectual historians have given little attention to the tremendous overlap between these two fields of knowledge, particularly before the rise of the disciplines after the Civil War.⁵³

Furthermore, Willard acknowledged that maps were both traditional representations of territory and more abstract symbols of national power. In other words, she thought about the iconographic *meaning* of national maps in a way that would become far more common with the advent of inexpensive, mass-produced cartography in the late nineteenth century. So Willard's textbook included an extended discussion of Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan in 1853, which she considered crucial to the extension of American influence abroad. She opened a long discussion of this episode by stressing the power of cartography to demonstrate American power abroad, and carefully quoted the Japanese Commissioner's portentous words to Perry: 'We have seen

⁵³ Baym, *Women and the Republic* (note 1).

the map of your country.’ This led her to reflect further on the then largely unrecognized power of maps in solidifying, even *creating*, the fact of the nation. This was a striking discussion that reversed traditional assumptions that maps reflected rather than shaped history, and presaged by over a century the claims of Thongchai Winichakul and Benedict Anderson that maps are agents of or models for what they purport to represent, rather than simply recorders of information.⁵⁴

Similarly, Willard drew the outline map of the United States as the backdrop to the Temple of Time because it suggested—as no other image could—the indivisibility of a nation that had attained continental dimensions only two years earlier. This outline map, with its spare internal topographic details, very much approximates what Anderson identifies, from a slightly later period, as the ‘logo-map,’ removed from its context and identifiable not just as part of a larger geographical whole but as ‘pure sign, no longer compass to the world.’⁵⁵ Placed in a textbook of American history, the map was a persuasive act, an attempt to direct the future rather than to document the past. As Willard explained,

The Map of this noble country is assumed as the background of the American Temple of Time. Its name is America; its inhabitants are Americans. If it were divided as Poland is, there would no more be an America for Americans, than there is a Poland for the Poles.⁵⁶

Her insistent refrain of American territorial and national unity reflects nothing so much as the depth of the political crisis and the imminence of civil war.⁵⁷

On a deeper level, Willard’s work indicates the complex nature of historical knowledge in nineteenth-century America. In her mind, writing American history was a political act of advancing the nation itself. To draw an atlas of American history was to give the nation a backstory that stabilized and legitimized its existence. To draw pictures of time gave the nation’s history and geography an indivisible quality, which could not be undone even as the Union dissolved. Willard conceptualized history as thoroughly geographical, and this intellectual conflation served more than one purpose. First, it made history manifest, and made the nation a territorial entity, undeniable for its sheer physicality. Second, it was a pedagogical strategy aimed at improving the assimilation of information. But there was also a practical dimension to Willard’s close association of historical and geographical knowledge. As an entrepreneur, she used interactive visual images to set her work apart in an intensely competitive market. By asking students to experiment with the concept of the nation—drawing it in different forms through time and space—she made learning itself an act of nationalism. In more ways than one, it was a profitable strategy.

⁵⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (note 19), 173. I have elaborated on some of these themes in my *Geographical Imagination in America, 1880–1950*, Chicago, 2001, 239–242, as has Neil Smith, in his *American Empire: Roosevelt’s Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*, Berkeley, 2003.

⁵⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (note 19), 175.

⁵⁶ Willard, *Abridged History of the United States, or Republic of America*, New York, 1860, 417.

⁵⁷ Determined to avert secession, she insisted that the vitriolic politics of the 1850s created ‘a healthier tone of public sentiment,’ and throughout 1860 and 1861 gathered hundreds of women’s signatures on a petition for peace which she presented to Congress. When war broke out she devised an elaborate plan of colonization for blacks in the hopes of ending the war. Perhaps this is unsurprising, given that the fact of the United States was central not just to her identity as a nationalist but also to her livelihood as one of the nation’s first historians.