

The Imagined States of America: The Unmanifest History of Nineteenth-century North America

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The Imagined States of America: The Unmanifest History of Nineteenth-century North America explores the histories of the many nation-building projects that developed in North America over the course of the nineteenth century. Stretching from Aaron Burr's and James Wilkinson's territorial intrigues in the interior of North America at the beginning of the nineteenth century to the formation of the Hawaiian Republic at the century's close, *The Imagined States of America* will shed light on the many alternate national projects that competed with the expansive territorial claims of the United States, Mexico, and Canada. By illuminating how the trilateral division of the continent emerged from a broad range of national alternatives, this book will highlight the contingency of national expansion and challenge the story of unrivaled incorporation and growth that has characterized most histories of the nineteenth-century United States.

I argue that a closer look at nineteenth-century North America reveals a continent replete with national possibilities. During the nineteenth century, such nations as the Republic of Lower California, the Cherokee Nation, the Republic of Texas, and the Confederate States of America shared space with the United States, Mexico, and imperial dominions on the mental map of North America. Despite their relegation to the fringes of most histories of the period, alternative nations are surprisingly easy to find in the historical record. From the Texas colonists who revolted against Mexico to Native peoples who fought to defend their sovereignty to the eleven southern states that seceded from the United States in 1861, nineteenth-century North America was full of people who did not want to be Americans, who did not believe that one nation either could or should extend across the continent, and who worked, schemed, and fought to create alternative nation-states. People imagined new nations for many reasons—because they sought wealth and power; because they felt there was no room for them within the established nation-states; because they rejected the legitimacy of those governments; or because they believed those nations had strayed from their ideals. Among their ranks were people from all parts of North America and a range of social, political, economic, racial, and cultural groups. By bringing these stories together I will link the western history of conquest and incorporation and the eastern history of secession and reconstruction, and provide a new synthesis of nineteenth-century North America.