

# 200 Years Ago

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The United States has been an independent nation for only 36 years. There are just 18 states .



but with the Northwest and Mississippi Territories, and the vast Louisiana Purchase, the country spans the entire North American continent. Our neighbors, British Canada to the north and Spanish colonies to the south and west are resistant to any further expansion of our borders.

The U.S. population has reached about 7,700,000. Most Americans are settled along the Atlantic coast or within 100 miles of navigable waters. Western Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and areas along the



Flatboats carrying settlers on the Ohio

Mississippi River are the “frontier” and settlers are just starting to move further west. In the Northwest Territory, the Iroquois, Seneca and other Native American tribes occupy major portions of land. The Cherokee, Creek and Seminole nations occupy the southeast and the ‘Floridas’. All are feeling the pressure of white settlers moving into their homelands.



Indian Raid in the Ohio Valley

American settlers and officials in the Northwest believe that the British are supplying weapons to tribal leaders like Tecumseh, and encouraging attacks on American settlements.



Tecumseh



James Madison

Politically, the country is divided. Democratic-Republicans under President Madison support states rights over a strong central government, and moderate reactions to foreign interference. They are fully aware that our military forces are not prepared to go to war.

The “War Hawks”, led by Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun, support westward expansion and aggressive action against the Native tribes and the British. In some regions of the country, public reactions to events leading up to the war result in rioting and bloodshed.



Henry Clay



John C. Calhoun



“The War Dance”- 1812 Cartoon Mocking War Hawks in Maryland

Regional and economic differences are at work as well. New England and the western and southern states all press to see that their interests are not ignored. The Threats of lost revenue from trade and exports cause some regions to actively oppose going to war. In some New

England cities, there is talk of seceding from the Union if war is declared.

**Next:** Why did the U.S. declare war on Britain?

