

Annual States. But to understand the question properly, it is necessary to
consider the prior claims of the United States; and also the cir-
-cumstances under which Virginia, and other States relinquished
their titles.

From the earliest settlements of the Colonies, controversies
existed among them, respecting their Territorial limits; which
interfered with each other on the Atlantic coast, and with the
pretensions of France & Spain in running westwardly to the
Mississippi River and the South Sea. By the Treaty of 1763
the Western claims of Great Britain were limited to the
Mississippi; and the extensive territory claimed by France
to the Eastward of that River, was ceded to the British Crown.
After the declaration of Independence, it was contended by
some of the States, particularly, Rhode Island, New Jersey,
Delaware and Maryland that the Crown lands, "if wrested
"from the common Enemy by the blood & treasure of the thirteen
"States, ought to be deemed a common property, subject to the
"disposition of Congress for the ^{general} common good."

Maryland protested against the exclusive claims of
the large States, and insisted, "that the Country unsettled at
"the commencement of the War, claimed by the British Crown,
"and ceded to it by the Treaty of Paris, should be considered,
"a common property, subject to be parcelled out by Congress into
"free, convenient and Independent States."

The large States differed among themselves as to their
respective limits, and each claimed a larger portion of territory
than the rest were willing to allow. The claims of the Union
were derived from the conquest of the disputed Territory by means
of the common force, and from the Treaty of Paris, under which
all the rights of Great Britain, both in the soil and juris-
-diction, passed to the United States.

This subject was a source of constant irrita-
-tion, and threatened a dissolution of the Federal Alliance.
At length, Virginia, New York, and the other States, which
claimed the Western lands, successively relinquished their
titles, for the common benefit of the Union.

Whatever might have been the uncertainty of these
conflicting claims, there can be no doubt that after the
relinquishment of the State titles, they were all vested
in the United States, on the conditions expressed in the deed
of Cession; which being accepted, formed a compact between
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