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***Sources and Interpretations***

“A Better View of the Country”: A Missouri Settlement Map by William Clark

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In 1816, William Clark sent a rough sketch of Indian treaty lines around U.S. settlements in Missouri to the secretary of war. Declared lost in the mid-twentieth century, the map was actually misattributed and misdated at the National Archives. Correcting that attribution reveals the first original Clark map in nearly seventy years. More importantly, it exposes the reach of Clark’s efforts to expropriate Indigenous land while serving as Missouri’s territorial governor and Indian superintendent. The sketch catches him manipulating a treaty line to seize 10.5 million acres of Sauk, Meskwaki, and Iowa territory after the War of 1812, a move that broke the Treaty of Ghent, triggered a stampede of slaveholder emigration, and lurched Missouri toward statehood. Despite leaving a permanent mark on maps of the United States, this land grab remains absent from Clark biographies, studies of the War of 1812, and ethnohistories of the region’s tribal nations. When placed in context, this new map both sharpens our understanding of Clark’s legacy as an administrator of Indian affairs committed to settler expansion and points, more generally, to manuscript map enclosures as underappreciated sources for understanding the tactics of conquest that built the United States.