

Orange County and Global Politics ca. 1734

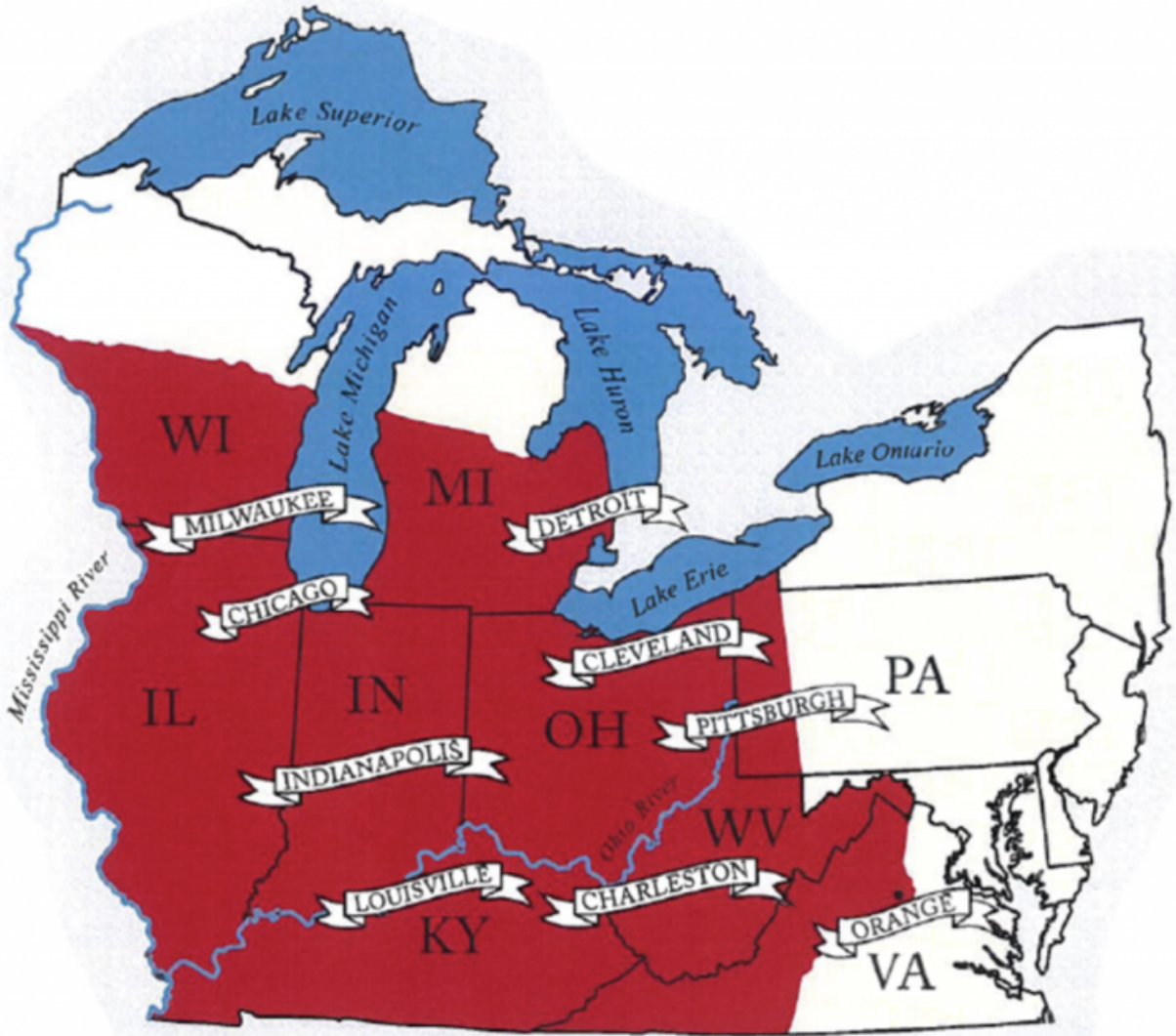
As cited by Frank Walker as cited in the Orange County Historical Society *Newsletter*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Summer, 2009), 3:

“Of all the ... birthday stories that can be told about Orange County, Virginia, the most popular is sure to be the one that at the time of its formation, the county’s Act of Establishment described boundaries that encompassed all of five future states (Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia) and portions of three others (Michigan, Wisconsin, Virginia). The creation of this huge county was, however, not a harmless joke or a publicity stunt. It was done with serious purpose and with the understanding that at some later time it might lead to war. [Please reference map below.]

“To understand the significance of Orange County’s 1734 formation, one needs to begin in the early 1600s. After decades of warily eyeing each other, the major colonial powers of the day made their moves. In **1607** the English landed at Jamestown. In **1608** the French established Quebec as the capital of ‘New France.’ In **1609** the Spanish chartered Santa Fe as the capital of ‘New Mexico,’ while the Dutch explored the Hudson River in preparation for the settling of ‘New Amsterdam.’ While none of them were ready at that moment to risk open warfare, they were all committing themselves to a contest to gain possession of the wild but promising lands of North America.

“By the 1730s, the Dutch had been forced out by the British, and Spain was hobbled by internal problems. France, however, was another story. From its base in New France, the French had begun to develop down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Among other lands, the French began to lay claim to the Northwest Territory between the Ohio and the Mississippi. With the establishment of Orange County, the English answered.

“Orange County’s Act of Establishment created boundaries that took in all of the Northwest Territory and placed British America at the banks of the Mississippi. The Virginia colony was populous, wealthy, and well-governed, and it actively asserted the new boundaries created for it by Orange County. It was a direct challenge that the French could not ignore. The resulting French and Indian War (1754-1763) spilled over onto the European continent as the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763). With its defeat, France began to lose territory and power in North America, and the momentum established with the formation of Orange County began to drive British settlement, and later American settlement, west to the Pacific.”



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