



Citizens of Convenience: The Imperial Origins of American Nationhood on the U.S.-Canadian Border (Early American Histories)

Lawrence B. A. Hatter

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Like merchant ships flying flags of convenience to navigate foreign waters, traders in the northern borderlands of the early American republic exploited loopholes in the Jay Treaty that allowed them to avoid border regulations by constantly shifting between British and American nationality. In *Citizens of Convenience*, Lawrence Hatter shows how this practice undermined the United States' claim to nationhood and threatened the transcontinental imperial aspirations of U.S. policymakers.

The U.S.-Canadian border was a critical site of United States nation- and empire-building during the first forty years of the republic. Hatter explains how the difficulty of distinguishing U.S. citizens from British subjects on the border posed a significant challenge to the United States' founding claim that it formed a separate and unique nation. To establish authority over both its own nationals and an array of non-nationals within its borders, U.S. customs and territorial officials had to tailor policies to local needs while delineating and validating membership in the national community. This type of diplomacy?balancing the local with the transnational?helped to define the American people as a distinct nation within the Revolutionary Atlantic world and stake out the United States' imperial domain in North America.

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