

Connecting History

Expansion

Europeans would continue to settle and claim lands in the West until they reached the Pacific Ocean. You will see this theme emerge when you study westward expansion in later chapters.

Americans Seize the Frontier Determined to retake Fort Sackville, Clark and his men set out for Vincennes from Kaskaskia in February 1779. Hamilton wasn't expecting an attack because the rivers were flooding the woods. But Clark's men slogged through miles of icy swamps and waded through chest-deep water. They caught the British at Vincennes by surprise.

When Hamilton and his troops tried to remain in the fort, Clark pretended to have a larger force than he really had. Clark also executed some Native American allies of the British in plain view of the fort. He threatened to do the same to the British unless they surrendered. Frightened, the British gave up.

Clark's victory gave the Americans a hold on the vast region between the Great Lakes and the Ohio River (even though Fort Detroit on Lake Erie remained in the hands of the British). This area was more than half the total size of the original 13 states. The expansion of the war into the frontier also had another consequence: it forced the British again to spread their troops over a larger area and further weakened the British war effort.

▲ **CAUSES AND EFFECTS** Explain why the war spread to the frontier.

War on the Waves

▼ **KEY QUESTION** How did Americans expand the naval war?

The war expanded not only west into the frontier but also eastward to the high seas. By 1777, Britain had over 200 warships off the American coast. This allowed Britain to control the Atlantic trade routes to European markets.

British Trade Disrupted Because the American navy was small and weak, Congress encouraged American **privateers** to attack British merchant ships.

A privateer is a privately owned ship that has been granted permission by a wartime government to attack an enemy's merchant ships. After capturing a ship, the crew of a privateer sold its cargo and shared the money. America commissioned more than 1,000 privateers to prey on the British. They captured hundreds of ships, causing British merchants to call on their government to end the war.

Though outnumbered, the Continental Navy scored several victories. A daring officer named **John Paul Jones** inspired Americans by sailing across the Atlantic to attack British ships along the coast of Britain itself.

"I Have Not Yet Begun to Fight" In 1779, Jones became the commander of a ship named *Bonhomme Richard*. With four other ships, he patrolled the English coast. In September, Jones's vessels approached a convoy in which two British warships were guarding a number of supply ships.

James Forten, who later became famous for his efforts to end slavery, joined a privateer at the age of 14.

