

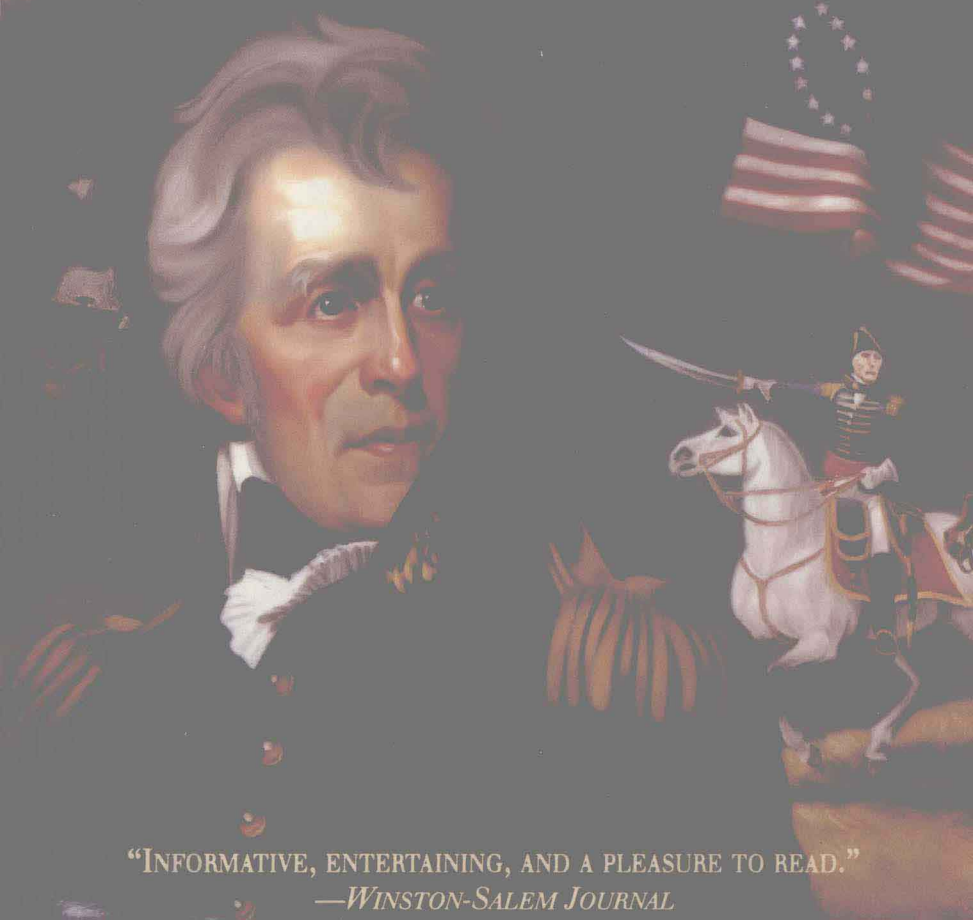
FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

FROM THE WAR OF 1812 TO THE MEXICAN WAR,

THE SAGA OF AMERICA'S EXPANSION

ROBERT LECKIE

AUTHOR OF DELIVERED FROM EVIL, NONE DIED IN VAIN, AND
GEORGE WASHINGTON'S WAR



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FROM SEA ≈ TO ≈ SHINING SEA

*From the War of 1812
to the Mexican War,
the Saga of America's Expansion*

ROBERT LECKIE



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The United States in 1782





OREGON
COUNTRY

MINNESOTA

Missouri R.

UNORGANIZED
TERRITORY

Arkansas R.

MEXICO

*Pacific
Ocean*

*Red R.
Brazos R.*

TEXAS
ANNEXATION

Rio Grande

The United States in 1847



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From Victory to Anarchy

IN THE SPRING OF 1781, GENERAL GEORGE WASHINGTON HEARD alarming reports—later proven to be true—that Charles Gravier, the Comte de Vergennes and King Louis XVI's foreign minister, was planning to end the war with Great Britain by abandoning the American ally and convening a peace conference of European powers friendly to France that would leave the British in possession of land they now occupied—the modern Midwest—thus blocking any westward expansion by the rebellious colonists. French withdrawal from the war would sound the death knell of American independence. Instead of the arrival of a great French fleet as promised, there would come to America only transports to take King Louis's white-coated regulars home. After them King George III's commissioners would probably appear to administer the oath of allegiance to a conquered people, and to take “Mr.” Washington along with John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and other signers of the Declaration of Independence, to London, there to stand trial for treason.

This plan, contained in a secret memorandum to himself drawn up by Vergennes, was never made public at the time, although Vergennes had sounded out the British on the proposal and received enthusiastic support. With Washington, it had the effect of making him yearn more desperately for a single decisive victory that would destroy the

British Crown's will to continue the war. So on May 21 in Wethersfield, Connecticut, he met with General Jean Baptiste Donatien de Vimeur, the Comte de Rochambeau, to plan a summer campaign.

In spite of the Vergennes plan, of which Rochambeau was unaware, the promise of the great French West Indian fleet for use against the British had not been withdrawn. Both Washington and Rochambeau expected it to appear under the Comte Francois Joseph Paul de Grasse, and the American commander wanted desperately to use it in a campaign against New York City held by General Sir Henry Clinton. New York was an obsession with Washington. He had been defeated in and around there three times: on Long Island, in the city itself and at White Plains. Each time, he had saved his army—truly notable feats of generalship, much as successful withdrawals do not excite the public—and would continue to do so throughout five years of defeat and retreat brightened only by such rallies as the brilliant raids on Trenton and Princeton. In May of 1781 it seemed to Washington that his time for vengeance had come, for between them he and the French general commanded 16,600 men: 8,800 Americans and 7,800 French. With de Grasse's powerful fleet this should be enough to overwhelm Clinton.

But then Washington and Rochambeau made an armed reconnaissance of Sir Henry Clinton's New York defenses, finding to their dismay that they were much too strong to be stormed. Their dejection turned to joy, however, when on August 14 they received the electrifying news that de Grasse was enroute to the Chesapeake with twenty-eight big ships and three thousand men!

The Chesapeake! Lord Charles Cornwallis's southern army was there! General Nathanael Greene and the aroused Patriots of the Carolinas had disabused His Lordship of his conviction that he could win the South for King George III. Hastening north to Virginia, with Greene snapping at his heels, he had halted in the little tobacco-trading port of Yorktown, and there taken up a defensive position expecting reinforcements from Clinton in New York and a rescuing British fleet under Sir Samuel Graves.

George Washington now forgot the New York operation and prepared to march south, first notifying the Marquis de Lafayette to keep Cornwallis cornered in Yorktown. Next, efforts were made to convince Clinton that New York was still the Franco-American objective. Staten Island was made to appear the staging area for an assault. Roads toward it were improved. A party of French in nearby Chatham, New Jersey, began making bake ovens as though for a siege. Leaving three thousand men above New York, Washington sent two thousand across the Hudson into New Jersey. The French followed. A leisurely march