This dissertation examines the role of the early American state, especially institutions created during the 1780s and 1790s, in the settlement of the states of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Focusing on the United States Army, land offices, Indian trade factories, and on economic policies, this dissertation argues that the United States government left indelible marks throughout the civil society and politics of the region. Federalists also survived in Ohio much longer than it did elsewhere (as long as the 1830s), and in turn they formed the basis of a new alliance that morphed into the Whig Party. Westerners also engaged politics differently from the rest of the nation, working from a position of raised expectations that showed most conspicuously in the American System that took shape in the Ohio River valley.