

## Cosmopolite's Mount Sinai Domains



### Lorenzo Dow Dreams of Empire in the Era of Good Feelings

Before they left for a preaching tour of England in the fall of 1805, Lorenzo Dow warned his wife, Peggy, that once they got there she might have to sell her gown for bread. Lorenzo was famous in America as an apostle of God—an eccentric itinerant who traveled “without purse and scrip,” usually on foot, unkempt, clothed in cast-offs. Austerity was part of the job, a crucial component of the character he played. Peggy didn’t have to sell her gown during that trip, but only because the English were more inclined to charity than Lorenzo had led her to hope.

Eleven years later, in the autumn of 1816, Lorenzo met with a lawyer and some associates in Philadelphia and bought a little over 345,000 acres of what is now Wisconsin for the decidedly non-apostolic sum of \$86,280, paid in full. In the midst of the bubble that would burst in the panic of 1819, credit was easy in 1816 and Dow certainly borrowed to put his stake together. Still, it was a lot of money for a “poor wanderer” to leverage: the common laborers, artisans, and farmers to whom Dow pitched his message likely wouldn’t earn that much money in two lifetimes.

The interesting thing is that Lorenzo Dow’s public persona did not change as his access to wealth grew; if anything, he doubled down on his performance of apostolic poverty. “His dress is mean, his voice harsh; his gesticulation and delivery ungraceful in the extreme, and his whole appearance and manners are calculated to excite the curiosity and wonder, if not the disgust, of his hearers,” one genteel newspaper complained in 1820. In the 1814 edition of his autobiography Dow made a blunt assertion of his poverty specifically with respect to land: “I have not an acre of ground I call my own upon earth—and but

a small pittance of this world's goods in any shape or form." Although he edited his journals incessantly, that passage didn't change for subsequent editions. The final edition he edited, published in 1833, told of his abject poverty during this period of land acquisition.

The complications of Dow's character extend not just to the fact that he was quietly wealthy but also to what he desired to do with his wealth. As his fame grew in the first decade of the nineteenth century, Dow (who made a habit of referring to himself in the third person) had started calling himself "Cosmopolite": "a citizen of the world; one who is at home in every place," as defined by a contemporary dictionary. By all appearances, though, Cosmopolite bought all of that land with the intention of settling down. Dow exercised his penchant for eccentric eponym all over the maps drafted in conjunction with his purchases: he christened a choice plot at the confluence of two rivers "Cosmopolite's Mt. Sinai Domains"; he named townships for himself, Peggy, and various of his associates; he drafted a plat for his capital, which he called Loren. An ardent if cautious abolitionist, he inscribed his political beliefs onto the landscape, marking off a settlement for free blacks. In 1817 he began doling out parcels of his holdings to friends and acquaintances, creating networks of obligation among those who might follow him to his promised land. His imagination ranging over land he most likely never saw, the eccentric Cosmopolite dreamt an empire.

Dow came to find the character he created constraining, but because his authority was tied to it, he could not easily escape it.

Dow's aspirations and the fact that he kept them quiet illustrate a crucial but overlooked point about self-creation in the early-national period. As we'll see, Dow was a premier representative of the populist, democratic, Jeffersonian ethos. He eschewed traditional authorities, valorized the "common man," and decried all forms of religious establishment, which he called "Law Religion." "He cautioned his hearers not to pin their faith on those who preach in steepled houses, or to believe a thing because their grandmothers before them believed it," as one paper put it. Dow's public persona was built on a theatrical irreverence that embodied what Joyce Appleby has identified as the Jeffersonian impulse toward "cultivating an appreciation for novelty, undermining deference, and enhancing the self-confidence of ordinary white men." Men like Dow have stood as symbols of the democratizing of American Protestantism in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Dow's secret attempt to shift roles, though, demonstrates that such leveling was much more complicated than it might appear. As an apostle of God as well as a man of the people, Dow not only reflected the "aspirations and values of common people," as Nathan Hatch put it: he also helped create those aspirations and values by performing them publicly, and this exaggerated performance of class identity constituted its own ideal type. The poor wanderer had to be poor; the champion of the simple man had to be simple. Dow came to find the character he created

constraining, but because his authority was tied to it, he could not easily escape it. He eventually did escape it, in a way, but only by distancing himself from the biblical model on which he originally drew. This lesson speaks to the relationship between authenticity and authority and to the conflation of religious and political identity in the new nation. It also says something about the perils of being a wealthy populist.

Lorenzo Dow started preaching in 1795, a few years after being converted among Methodists. He wasn't very good at it. "I being young both in years and ministry, the expectations of many were raised, who did not bear with my weakness and strong doctrine, but judged me very hard," he wrote of an early sermon. The first official correspondence Dow records from the Methodist hierarchy, following his first stab at itineracy in 1796, is a letter telling him to go home.



"Peggy Dow," engraving taken from *History of Cosmopolite; or The Four Volumes of Lorenzo's journal, Concentrated in One: Containing his Experience and Travels, from Childhood, to Near his Fortieth Year*, by Lorenzo Dow (Philadelphia, 1816). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.



"Lorenzo Dow," engraving taken from History of Cosmopolite; or The Four Volumes of Lorenzo's journal, Concentrated in One: Containing his Experience and Travels, from Childhood, to Near his Fortieth Year, by Lorenzo Dow, third edition (Philadelphia, 1816). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

From early on, though, Dow made up in provocativeness and persistence what he lacked in skill. He preached a strong version of the era's common Methodist iteration of the evangelical message: repent or be damned; leave off the things of the world; stop drinking and playing cards and fiddling. It was *how* he preached it that made him successful. He preached at night, by torchlight, causing "a great deal of talk." He singled out members of his audiences for censure, based on their appearance or, often, based on nothing in particular. Sometimes he prophesied that specific individuals who opposed him would soon die; other times, he prayed openly that they would. He digressed, he ranted; detractors found him always "off in a tangent." "Some said I was crazy," he wrote, "others that I was possessed of the devil." It didn't matter to Dow what they said, as long as the stories about him generated audiences. "Many it brought out to hear the strange man: and [they] would go away cursing and swearing, saying that I was saucy and deserved knocking down, and the uproar was so great among the people." He took his "craziness" everywhere, relentlessly. On his first big preaching tour, Dow covered 4,000 miles and was gone eight months. Methodist leaders tried to send him home four different times.

In the spring of 1804, Dow estimated that in the preceding 40 days he had preached to 100,000 people, which was likely a characteristic over-estimate, but still. By 1808, he was so famous that a report of his death was covered by newspapers in at least 13 of the 16 states; a report from London finally assured Dow's anxious public that he was still on this side of Paradise. People started naming their kids for him at least as early as 1806—the later

nineteenth century would see a number of men named Lorenzo Dow (Something). In 1823, an exhibit of wax sculptures on tour in the United States featured likenesses of celebrities such as George Washington, Andrew Jackson, notable European rulers, and the singular Lorenzo Dow.

The only thing people talked about more than Dow's eccentric style was his appearance. By nature, he was physically hard to miss—pale and tall, “a long-armed ape” as one rather pointed report had it. He made the most of that natural appearance through grooming and dress. “He wears his hair long and flowing, and his beard unshorn in imitation of the Apostles!”; “his pale visage [is] in contrast with locks that would vie with the wings of a raven, and a well set beard of the same colour extend[s] to his breast.” An amused review of the wax exhibit in a Detroit paper reported that Dow appeared there “as usual, very dirty.” During his first preaching tour of Ireland, a fellow preacher tried to give him his own razor and begged him “to dress more ministerial.” “Many were offended at my plainness, both of dress, expressions and way of address in conversation about heart religion; so that the country seemed to be in an uproar; scarcely one to take up my cause, and I was mostly known by the name of Crazy Dow.” As one paper summarized, “there was nothing then in his garb and habit that argued sense or even sanity.”

Through his eccentricities Dow cultivated a particular kind of religious authority. He was frequently (and not just by himself) compared to an apostle: Paul did, after all, call himself “a fool for Christ's sake” (1 Corinthians 4:10). Hatch has suggested that Dow's performance was modeled on John the Baptist, which has its merits: he was a wanderer in the wilderness, proclaiming the coming of Christ. An argument could be made that he had something of a Christ complex—the first edition of his journal includes an extended account of a dream, later excised, in which he is unobtrusively scourged and nailed to a cross. “Apostle” was the role he claimed for himself, though, arguing in an 1814 publication that there had to be latter-day apostles because in the Great Commission Christ told his (first) apostles that he would be with them “always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28:19-20). “I ask how he could be *with* his Apostles unto the end of the world, unless he *had* Apostles to be WITH?” Dow argued, with characteristically literalist logic. “It is evident he could not allude to the *twelve* only; for he knew they would not live to the end of the world ... he must include succeeding ministers, who would step into the Apostles' shoes.” Dow travelled widely, founded churches, dispensed advice and explained doctrine in lengthy epistles. He also, as he was fond of relating, suffered constantly for the good work. “Thrice was I beaten with rods,” Paul writes (2 Corinthians 11:25), “once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep.” According to Dow's journal: check, check, and check. Well, only one shipwreck, and really it was just a close call, but he did get wet a lot, traveling in the rain.

"Plan of Carvers Grant from the Nadowissie Indians," 1816. Miscellaneous Book I.C. 1. Courtesy of Philadelphia City Archives. Click image to enlarge in new window.

He accepted bodily suffering when he could, but Dow's apostolic identity was primarily based in his utter independence and in his unqualified embrace of apostolic poverty. These went together. Itineracy was expensive—the costs of room, board, and transportation were compounded by the fact that someone traveling as constantly as Dow had no chance to farm or ply a conventional trade. Moreover, Dow had no access to the usual means of an itinerant's support because he refused ordination. Ordained and licensed itinerants might expect to receive a small salary from whatever denominational organ they served, but the real monetary value of ordination was that it authorized a minister to expect, solicit, or at the very least accept support when it was offered by his audiences. Scholars often depict early-national revivalist evangelicalism as a realm of diluted institutions and open pulpits, where the authority to preach came from simply having the Spirit and the nerve. Assumptions about ministerial education and style were definitely different for New Light Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Christians, and other burgeoning denominations in this era, but ordination remained crucial: one could not simply declare oneself a preacher and pass the offering plate with impunity, because people still expected preachers to have papers. Women who wanted to preach ran up against this expectation constantly; African Americans did as well, until many formed denominational bureaucracies to issue themselves credentials. As a white male, Dow's only disadvantage with respect to ordination was his inability to listen to absolutely anyone. After being put on a probationary period by the Methodists at the beginning of his career, he repeatedly clashed with church leaders and was recalled from or abandoned the various circuits to which he was assigned.

After 1802, Dow gave up any pursuit of a formal preaching license, but he felt the sting: in the years before his national reputation solidified he "felt the want of credentials." Everywhere he went, Dow worried about being thought "an imposter." Methodist leaders warned him that they would make him one: "J. Lee had said, if I attempted to travel in the name of a Methodist, without their consent, he would advertise me in every paper on the continent &c, for an imposter." His solution was to build a personal following through his own methods and to never, ever, ask for donations. "There is no time nor place in Europe or America, that any person can point out, when or where I asked for a 'CONTRIBUTION,' for 'myself,' either directly or indirectly." Beyond the necessity that an apostle not beg, Dow felt that his role also meant that he could not always take even what came unasked. "It is true, I had many pounds, and handsome presents offered me in my journey; but I could not feel freedom to receive them, only just what would serve my present necessity, to get along to my appointments, as I was such a stranger in the country; and so many to watch me (as an imposter) for evil." He estimated in 1814 that he had turned down the overwhelming majority of contributions he'd been offered during his preaching career, "perhaps ten to one."

The relationship between poverty and authority that so affected Dow was not new in Christian history, of course. "If he asks for money, he is a false prophet," observed the author of the *Didache*, seventeen centuries before Cosmopolite wandered around New York City praying someone would offer him a change of underwear without his having to ask. (He'd shipped his ahead and they'd been lost in transit.) What is distinctive in the early-national period is the political edge to Dow's biblically informed persona. His recognition as an apostle was undergirded by the trappings of poverty, which had not just biblical but social associations that complicated and further constrained his role. Because Dow worked outside of not only the traditional ideals of the sedate and sedentary ministry, but even beyond the institutional expectations of those with whom he made common cause, his authority as a preacher depended entirely on public opinion. He was an extreme case of the problem of doubt that Amanda Porterfield and others have observed in this period of fluid communities and self-invention: the real sense of "imposter" that haunted Dow was the possibility that those he encountered in the world would glimpse a distance between the character that he played and the person he was.



Detail of "Bulah Ethiopia" from "Plan of Carvers Grant from the Nawdowissie Indians" (1816). Miscellaneous Book I.C. 1. Courtesy of Philadelphia City Archives.

Plenty of people looked for that distance, and plenty claimed to find it. Dow sort of broke character when he married Peggy in 1804: apostles couldn't be married, could they? He wrote an extensive "defense of matrimony" to compensate, and for a couple of years had to explain to skeptical congregations that while Paul might have been a eunuch for the Lord, Jesus had healed Peter's mother-in-law, and one cannot have a mother-in-law without being married. Ultimately, his reputation did not suffer on this count.

The money question dogged him, though: rumors about secret wealth followed him everywhere. His mid-1810s land deals would be exceptional, but the reality is that the wandering apostle was perhaps never as destitute as he made out. In July of 1803, soon after his engagement, Dow wrote to his parents that he had bought some land outside of Natchez, Mississippi, "where one day I hope to call my home." To be sure, he must've bought it cheap, but already he was building a reputation on poverty to the extent that he couldn't admit to owning much of anything. His published journal for this period recorded that he had sold his watch to buy a site to build the locals a meeting house, but that personally he was destitute. "I was now dirty and ragged, as my pantaloons were worn out, my coat and jacket worn through, as also my mogasons. I had only the smallest part of a dollar left: however some gentlemen gave me seven dollars, and then a collection was made, which I refused until they hurt my feeling and forced it upon me." Prior to this he had refused contributions on this trip for appearance's sake, so as not "to give Satan a sword to slay me, or power to

hedge up my way, as the eyes of hundreds were upon me.”

A few years later, Dow was caught up in a controversy over a mill trace elsewhere in Mississippi and defensively inserted his explanation of the affair into his publications for the next several years. The whole thing actually put him in debt \$6,000, he claimed, but gossip turned his Mississippi holdings into “‘three first rate flower mills;’ as many ‘saw mills,’ three Cotton and two Sugar plantations—a large elegant brick house and Twenty-five slaves, and a prodigious sum of money in the Bank!”

Beyond accusations of secret excessive wealth, Dow made so much of his poverty that detractors sarcastically wondered how he even fed himself. “We do not find that it is said, that any animal is supported on air, but the Cameleon,” suggested one (scientifically misinformed) letter to an Ohio paper in 1809. “Lorenzo is not the Cameleon, or Egyptian Lizard; therefore, Lorenzo is not supported on air.” Parroting Dow’s own argumentative style, the author cut to the central paradox of an apostle who did not work with his own hands but also refused donations: “Mankind in general, are supported by their own labor or the donations of others. Lorenzo is not supported by his own labor; therefore, he must be supported by the donations of others.”



Detail of the western portion of Carver’s Grant, where most of Dow’s holdings were, from “Plan of Carvers Grant from the Nadowissie Indians” (1816). Miscellaneous Book I.C. 1. Courtesy of Philadelphia City Archives.

Beginning in 1800, however, Dow actually was supported by his own labors, having availed himself of a means of support that the apostles of old had lacked: the popular press. It was common for itinerants to sell their writings as they traveled, to finance the good work. Dow took this to unprecedented levels. Before 1820, he published at least forty-five editions of at least 13 distinct works—autobiographies, hymnals, political treatises, theological arguments. There are so many, with so many different imprints (Augusta, Georgia; Windham, Connecticut; Salisbury, North Carolina; Nashville, New York, Dublin, Liverpool) that it’s difficult to keep track; the actual count of publications was probably much higher, as Dow often printed cheap pamphlets that may not have survived. In addition to his own works, he bought up copyrights for popular works by others, had them printed and reaped the proceeds. He always had some manuscript ready to be printed, some pamphlet to sell, a crate of books to trade.

Dow was predictably leery of acknowledging the income from his books. “The profits of my books—I derived no real advantage from, before I went to Europe the last time—and by the ‘Journal’ I sunk about one thousand dollars; by engaging too many to meeting-houses, before the work was done,” he wrote in 1814. He made much of instances in which he paid for books to be printed only to have them lost or stolen; his proceeds were constantly being eaten up by



unforeseen exigencies.

Buying the land, though, was unavoidably an acknowledgement of some financial success. As far as I can tell, Charles Coleman Sellers, Dow's only biographer to date, was the first to publicize the land deals, writing about them in shocked tones in 1928. Even at historical (and historiographical) remove, Sellers was uncomfortable with how they fit Dow's image. "It was impossible that he should be both openly wealthy and continue his holy calling," Sellers wrote. He was mostly right.

Resonantly, the story of Dow's land purchases actually begins with another intrepid character's frustrated authenticity. The parcels of land that Dow bought were part of what was known as the Carver Grant, a four-million-acre chunk of land roughly described by a triangle with points at St. Paul, Minnesota, and Iron and Wood counties in Wisconsin. The land was supposedly deeded to one Jonathan Carver by two chiefs of the Naudowessie tribe in 1767, when Carver visited as part of an expedition. In 1769, Carver—a onetime soldier in the British Army turned explorer, ne'er-do-well, and bigamist—went to London to try to get the Crown to validate his claim. He failed, but by the time of his death in 1780 he was quietly selling off his notional holdings to support his two families. Carver's claim ran into a complicated thicket of legal questions involving the right of private individuals to buy land from Indians, the standing of British deeds following independence, and whether or not Carver had made the whole thing up (which he almost certainly did). A succession of quixotic champions—Carver's several heirs, other land speculators, elected officials, assorted hangers-on—nurtured the Carver Grant into a land speculation scheme (almost) too big to fail, working to have the grant validated while continuing to buy, sell and trade its various parcels. One of Carver's heirs sold his interest in the claim to one Benjamin Munn, whom Dow came to know in Philadelphia in 1816, and Cosmopolite, apparently, smelled an opportunity.

According to the deeds I've come across, Dow actively dealt in the Carver Tract between November of 1816 and February of 1818. He gave his purchases considerable thought. He laid out Loren, his capital, using street names from Philadelphia, subtitled the plat "The City of Peace." In 1816—a few months before the American Colonization Society formed to facilitate free blacks' emigration to Africa—he christened a corner of his imagined empire "Beulah Ethiopia," combining a common term for all things African with a name for land promised to the redeemed in Isaiah 62:4: "Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken ... but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah: for the LORD delighteth in thee." Dow preached in African American churches routinely and, judging from the number of African American children named for him in the nineteenth century, he was popular enough among the black population. It's hard not to notice, though, that Beulah Ethiopia was literally the farthest corner of Cosmopolite's empire: Dow was an abolitionist, not an integrationist.



"Lorenzo Dow," lithograph by Childs & Lehman, after painting by A. T. Lee (Philadelphia, 1834). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Dow sold some of his holdings (including Beulah Ethiopia) in April of 1817 to Robinson Tyndale, gentleman of Philadelphia. Other deeds record sales the following November, but these appear to have been gifts from Dow to his would-be followers rather than business transactions: he unloaded plots of 100,000, 2,560, and 23,000 acres for a total of just \$110. A notebook belonging to Tyndale, who for a while led a charge to have Carver's claim validated, contains a list of 21 individuals or groups "to whom Lorenzo Dow has given Deeds of Land in the N.W.T.," dated a few days after those generous transactions. Dow, it appears, had begun quietly playing the role of patriarch, building a following, possibly with an eye toward leading them west.

While Dow was in Philadelphia in November of 1817 distributing land, he published *Cosmopolite's Thoughts, on the Progress of Light and Liberty*, which amounts to a treatise on the providential unfolding of American history. Though characteristically idiosyncratic—somehow, he gets around to talking about how eels came to be in the Great Lakes—it is a strident statement of his commitment to democratic government, American exceptionalism and expansion, and "LIBERTY," in all its democratic grandeur. "When liberty of conscience was denied in the old world, and drove many to seek refuge in the new, improvements in society, in their form of government, have been increasing ever since." Without reading too much into it, the treatise might be the work of a man quietly beginning to imagine himself as the leader of a western colony. It ends with a curious statement that strains against Dow's typical self-positioning with regard to the things of the world. "Ease, popularity, or money, has not been my object or chief design; *and at most was only a secondary consideration*, subordinate to the first, viz. the glory of God, and the salvation of souls" (emphasis mine). That he might admit even a secondary concern for ease, fame, and money was unprecedented for Dow, but the poor wanderer had found some use, perhaps, for worldly things. "What is before me I know not, but I feel that there are *trials* ahead ... I feel this world is not my home, but I must use a small portion of it, while here I stay."

It's possible that the "small portion" Dow had in mind in that sentence was a chunk of modern-day Wisconsin. Dow travelled to London the next year to preach and to continue investigating the Carver claim. He managed to view some of Carver's petitions to the Crown and tracked down a copy of the third edition of Carver's published journal, which contained an engraving of what claimed to be Carver's deed from the Naudowessie (shockingly, the original was lost). In 1820, though, Dow reported to Tyndale that he'd reached a point with the British officials at which seeing more of the relevant legal documents would "be attended with considerable expence, which in the end might lodge me in the light house and there I stopt." Dow held onto parts of his land, but I've found no further evidence that he continued to pursue a clear claim (the federal

government issued its final decision on the Carver Grant in 1825). In the last edition of his journal he edited, published shortly before his death in 1834, Dow added a paragraph explaining that his extended presence in Philadelphia in the fall of 1816 had been caused by "a severe sickness." He also accented his poverty at about that time, noting that in the spring and summer of 1817 he was destitute. Dow died without direct descendants, but his second wife's nieces were still trying to make a claim on the Carver Grant in the 1870s, one of them reporting that her late uncle had never given up: he'd always been for suing the government over the land. Her aunt, she said, had thought it was all nonsense.

Dow never became a patriarch or a prophet like Moses, but his dreams of empire appear to have altered his self-representation. He was never quite the same poor apostle after he returned from England in 1819. In 1820 Peggy died, and Dow remarried mere months later. His second wife, Lucy Dolbeare, came from a wealthy family, and this brought renewed focus on his finances. Significantly, he stopped protesting. Though he changed nothing about his public performances, Dow more or less stopped professing apostolic poverty. After turning out at least seven editions of his journal between 1804 and 1816, an expanding record of his privations in the Lord's service, he didn't publish another one until 1833. In 1820, moreover, he began selling Dow's Patented Family Medicine, capitalizing on his fame to sell, well, snake oil. "Lorenzo Dow was at Tuscumbia, Alabama, on the 21st ult. Preaching and vending medicines for both soul and body, in the form of religious pamphlets and patent drugs," one paper reported in 1827. In his later years, it appears that he made more money from medicine than from books—the patent is the only specifically enumerated item in his will.

Other things changed, as well. While in prison for libel in 1821 (it's a long story), he who had once prayed for providence to supply him with underwear "gave money to each of the other prisoners, and distributed flannel shirts among them." The man who could brook no traditional, inherited authority became a Freemason in 1824. In 1825 he finally accepted formal ordination, from a Methodist splinter group.



Reproduction of the deed to Jonathan Carver as it appears in Carver's Travels in Wisconsin by Jonathan Carver, from the third London edition, printed by Harper & Brothers (New York, 1838). Includes the marks of Chiefs Hawnopawjatin and Otohtongoomlisheaw. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

In short, Lorenzo Dow gave up being a biblical character and became an American one: a self-made, self-authorizing celebrity. Some commentators still made note of his "apostolic" beard, and he did emphasize the biblical resonance of the time he spent in prison (Acts 16:23: check!), but his appearance and demeanor were now what was expected of being Lorenzo Dow, not of being Paul. "His beard

is permitted to grow entire, not even the upper lip being shaved, and his whole contour, is just such as might be expected in so extraordinary a man," one paper wrote. Detractors mocked him for being a preacher and a snake-oil salesman at the same time, but his place in the public consciousness was no longer dependent on consistency with a role other than the one he had defined. The character had such an independent existence that in 1830, an imposter Dow gave a number of successful sermons before being found out. As the *Didache* would have predicted, the false Dow did not have any qualms about asking for money.



Reproduction of the deed to Jonathan Carver as it appears in Carver's *Travels in Wisconsin* by Jonathan Carver, from the third London edition, printed by Harper & Brothers (New York, 1838). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Dow died—rather unexpectedly for someone who had been predicting his imminent demise for more than 40 years—while on a trip to Washington, D.C., in early 1834. He was visiting the seat of federal government on his own business, not the Lord's: he was hand-delivering a petition to renew the patent on his Family Medicine. He would not have objected to the first obituary that ran in his hometown paper. In a move that Amazon.com could certainly appreciate, the publisher, who was also a bookseller, announced Dow's death and then reminded the bereaved public that he had a large edition of Dow's collected works ready to sell.

## Acknowledgements :

Much of the research for this piece was conducted in Philadelphia with support from the McNeil Center for Early American Studies. The author would also like to thank Patricia Schaefer and Edward Baker of the New London County Historical Society, David Haugaard of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the staff at the Philadelphia Recorder's Office, the Minnesota Historical Society, Michael Blaakman, Andrew Fagal, and Amanda Porterfield and the staff of *Common-place* for putting together this special issue.



"A New Map of North American from the Latest Discoveries 1778," lithograph by Nathaniel Currier from engraved version for Carver's *Travels in Wisconsin* by Jonathan Carver, from the third London edition, printed by Harper & Brothers (New York, 1838). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. Click image to enlarge in new window.

## Further Reading:

Lorenzo Dow's works are most readily available in the various editions of the collection titled *The Dealings of God, Man, and the Devil, as Exemplified in the Life, Experience, and Travels of Lorenzo Dow, in a Period of More than a Half Century; with Reflections on Various Subjects, Religious, Moral, Political and Prophetic*, or some variation on that, published all over the place beginning in 1833.

The Minnesota Historical Society's [Robinson Tyndale Collection](#) is an amazing digital resource on the Carver Grant.

The only biography of Lorenzo Dow is Charles Coleman Sellers, *Lorenzo Dow: The Bearer of the Word* (New York, 1928).

On populism, imposture, and religion in the early national period, see Amanda Porterfield, *Conceived in Doubt: Religion and Politics in the New American Nation* (Chicago, 2012).

This article originally appeared in issue 15.3 (Spring, 2015).

---

Seth Perry is assistant professor of Religion in the Americas at Princeton University. His research interests include print culture, American religious history broadly, and the creation of individual religious authority. His current book project—"Abandoned Quarries: Bibles and Authority in Early-National America"—explores the material, rhetorical, and performative aspects of Bible usage in the early nineteenth century.