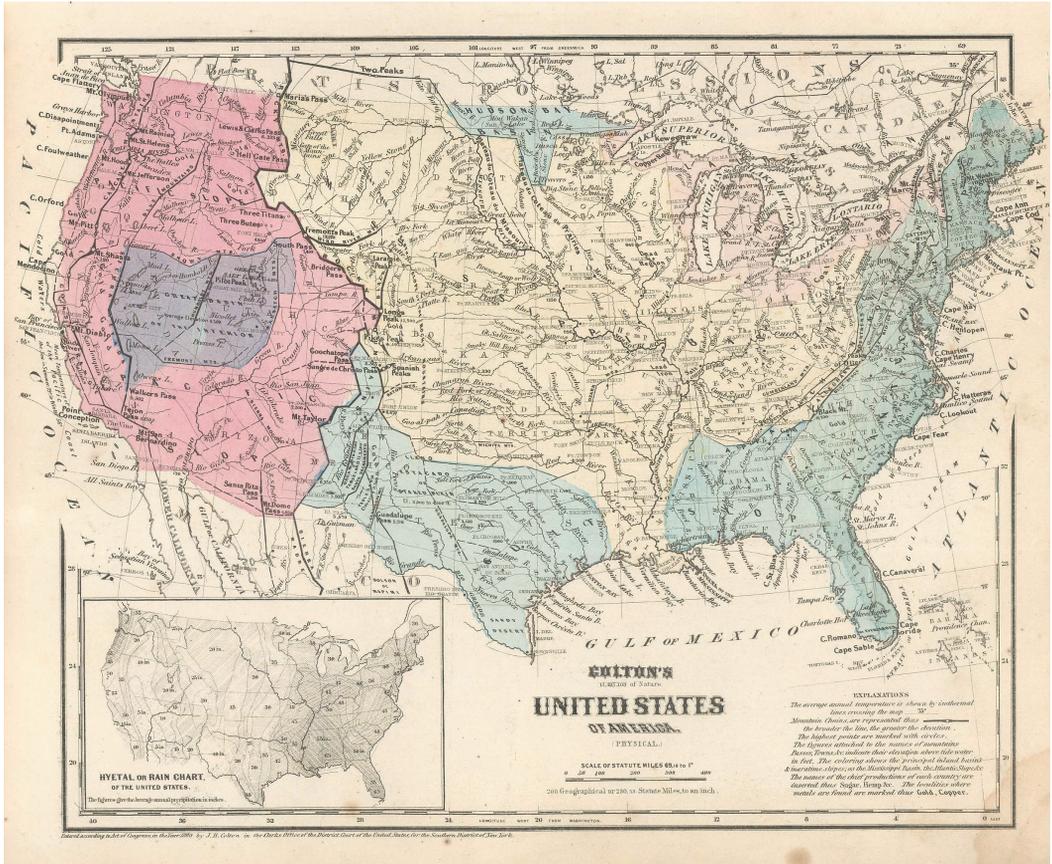


*America's boundaries in 1830 (Plate 1, top) and estimated water flows today (Plate 2, bottom). The mighty Mississippi in Lincoln's lifetime is indeed "the father of waters"—a vital artery severable only at great cost. Abe sees this better than anyone, hailing as he does from the region where many of the river's main feeders—the Upper Mississippi, Illinois, and Wabash in the north; the Ohio and Cumberland in the east; the Tennessee in the south; and the Missouri in the west—generally meet. Given river flows, America's 1830s boundaries make sense. Mexican Texas sits below the border-defining Red River, and only a thin northern sliver of Texas forms part of the Mississippi watershed (see Plate 6). The annexation of the entirety of Texas in the Age of Jackson is thus an option, not a commercial or military imperative.*



Mid-nineteenth-century America's main water basins (Plate 6). In Lincoln's era, it is often far easier to float persons and things on water than to haul them over land. Whereas other eye-catching maps use color to mark manmade borders between states, territories, and nations, this 1860 beauty uses color to highlight drainage areas. The Mississippi basin (among the biggest in the world) looms large—a crucial fact emphasized by Jackson, Webster, Douglas, Sherman, and Lincoln, among many others. All but a remote and elevated northern fragment of this great basin (a morsel above modern-day Montana) belongs entirely to the United States. The landlocked basin in purple drains into no ocean, but does feed the briny Great Salt Lake.