This paper engages in an historical, print culture analysis of the political material, both governmental and partisan, generated by the late 18th century struggle to establish the State of Franklin. The State of Franklin was an attempt by frontier Euro-American settlements in an area roughly encompassed by present day eastern Tennessee to formally secede from North Carolina and thereafter gain admittance to the new United States union as the 14th state. Although the establishment of Franklin was vehemently opposed by the North Carolina legislature and "anti-secession" settlers in the region, a rudimentary government apparatus was cobbled together by the Franklin separatists and persisted from 1784-1790. Near constant tension, occasionally violent, between pro-Franklin and anti-Franklin forces often handicapped even the most basic of government operations and printing was, consequently, a lesser concern in the attempt to form the first trans-Appalachian state. Nonetheless, like other 18th century political movements that encompassed literate populations, the State of Franklin made recourse to the printing press to circulate arguments justifying its existence. While no evidence suggests that printing operations ever set up shop within the short-lived borders of Franklin, would-be Franklin partisans and their North Carolina-loyalist opponents utilized the established printers of eastern North Carolina to wage a backcountry war of the written word.

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