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Between Frontier and Factory: Growth and Development in Washington, Pennsylvania, 1810–1870

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**Between Frontier and Factory:
Growth and Development in Washington, Pennsylvania, 1810-1870**

Eric D. Duchess

**Dissertation submitted to the
College of Arts and Sciences
at West Virginia University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy
in
History**

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ABSTRACT

Between Frontier and Factory: Growth and Development in Washington, Pennsylvania, 1810-1870

Eric D. Duchess

This dissertation examines the small town of Washington, Pennsylvania from its post-frontier period to the eve of industrialization. Two primary areas are covered in the study: the Market Revolution's growing influence on the local economy and society, and the Civil War's local impact. This study contributed to the field of urban and town history by providing a case study from a relatively under-examined region, the Upper Ohio Valley and southwestern Pennsylvania, by studying the relationship between its economic development and its social and political characteristics.

Washington was in many ways a typical small western Pennsylvania town, surrounded by farmland and serving as a local commercial and small manufacturing hub. By the 1810s, the town and surrounding county were adapting and adjusting to the growing Market Revolution, with expanding commercial activities, banking, the maturation of the cash-credit nexus in commerce, regular connections to distant markets, and transportation improvements, including local turnpikes, the National Road, and later, railroads.

But despite growing influences from the Market Revolution, Washington's economy and society experienced a high degree of continuity even into the post-Civil War years. There was no surge in population growth or industrialization until well after the Civil War, putting relatively little immediate pressure on the community between the 1810s and the 1870s. Although certainly not a boom-town, Washington Borough was still a growing and developing community, the study of which imparts a greater understanding of nineteenth century regional patterns and small town development generally.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

For more than half a century, articles, books, and other monographs on city, town, and rural communities have made major contributions to historians' understanding of nineteenth century America's social, economic, and political characteristics, not only in early-established areas on the East Coast, but also frontier and post-frontier communities dotted across the interior. Pioneering works in the 1950s and 1960s, like Richard Wade's *Urban Frontier*, Robert Dykstra's *Cattle Towns*, and Sam Bass Warner's *Private City* emphasized town and city importance in national development and their changing dynamics over time, including progressively greater links to the larger capitalist economy, industrialization, and the social changes that accompanied it.¹ By the 1970s, urban history reached new levels of sophistication and insight, as books like Michael Frisch's *Town Into City*, Paul Johnson's *A Shopkeeper's Millennium*, and Don Harrison Doyle's *Social Order of a Frontier Community*, probed more fully the relationship between economic development, social, cultural, and political patterns.² Urban case studies, comparative studies, and other town and city-oriented works have continued to examine these broad issues, choosing communities from a variety of states, regions, and sub-regions as examples. Although major cities and boom towns tend to draw the lion's share of scholarly attention, small town and rural communities must also be examined, for they were far more numerous than boom towns and metropolises, and perhaps more illustrative of ordinary America than the big city experience. As historian David Contosta has noted, obscure small towns with no claims to urban greatness frequently "illuminate larger forces and trends on a

¹ Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959); Robert R. Dykstra, *The Cattle Towns* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1968); Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City: Philadelphia in Three Periods of its Growth* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968).

² Michael H. Frisch, *Town Into City: Springfield, Massachusetts, and the Meaning of Community, 1840-1880* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972); Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (1978; repr., New York: Hill and Wang, 2004).

regional and national scale,” adding depth and new insights to historical interpretation and understanding.³ In describing Lancaster, Ohio, in the early nineteenth century, Contosta considers it one of the more significant and bustling towns in central Ohio, despite the fact that no local events or developments occurred that qualified it as famous or particularly outstanding. Lancaster’s significance to historians, Costosta argues, is “precisely because it fails to qualify for great fame, a characteristic that it shares with hundreds of other places, making it symptomatic of so many localities neglected by historians.”⁴

The nineteenth century was a period of immense economic, social, and political change in the United States. By the 1860s, the Market Revolution and the rise of modern capitalism fundamentally impacted economic, social, and political patterns in both North and South, with even small towns and rural areas increasingly under its influences. The market revolution was a decades-long process that did not unfold evenly across the country. Instead, its pace, character, and intensity varied greatly from place to place; some regions and towns were quickly and profoundly impacted, while others, like Washington Borough, experienced its effects more slowly and with less intensity. Similar to the market revolution, the Civil War impacted regions and localities in vastly different ways, including the war’s impact within the Union states. The war immediately and significantly transformed some towns and cities, while others, like Washington, experienced few or no transformative effects. Like most communities between the early 1800s and the immediate post-Civil War period, the town of Washington, Pennsylvania, as well as its surrounding county was compelled to adjust to new circumstances, opportunities and pressures rising from a fundamental economic transformation and the century’s largest war.

³ David Contosta, *Lancaster, Ohio, 1800-2000: Frontier Town to Edge City* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 3.

⁴ Ibid, 4.

The town of Washington, Pennsylvania, is one of the many small, ordinary communities that enhances historians' insight and understanding of nineteenth century American social, economic, and political history. By the early 1800s, the Ohio Valley was rapidly filling with farming communities, small towns already dotted the countryside, and a few larger cities emerged along the River. Although scholars have examined the larger cities, including Pittsburgh, Wheeling, Cincinnati, and Louisville, far more exhaustively than the region's small towns and rural areas, some recent important work on the smaller communities have demonstrated the Ohio Valley's rich potential for more contributions to the vast and complex field of urban and town history. Indeed, as historian Darryl Bigham observes, one of the Ohio Valley's striking characteristics is the relative absence of large cities and true boom towns, with more modest sized villages and towns being far more commonplace. Bigham argues that western small towns were typically founded as economic ventures and were important to local and regional economic development, and deserve examination despite their "failure" to achieve greatness. Bigham notes that "our images of growth, expansion, and destiny have encouraged us to focus on larger places...and to ignore these smaller locales," and he argues that the relatively few cities which experienced spectacular growth should not monopolize scholarly attention at the expense of the many towns that grew slowly, modestly, or perhaps barely at all.⁵

Southwestern Pennsylvania hosts the Ohio River's headwaters and the Ohio Valley's northeastern hub. The Upper Ohio Valley in the nineteenth century shared significant continuity with downriver areas insofar as it was characterized mostly by rural farming communities and small towns. Only two truly significant-sized cities, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Wheeling, (West) Virginia, emerged in the Upper Ohio Valley. Washington County, Pennsylvania, although not directly bordering the Ohio River, was relatively close to it, and the county's

⁵ Darryl Bigham, *Towns and Villages of the Lower Ohio* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 2-3.

eastern portions bordered the navigable Monongahela River which emptied into the Ohio River at Pittsburgh. Washington County's local political and economic center, Washington Borough, was founded in the early 1780s by a small scale land speculator hoping to improve his competency by founding a town to service the wider county's economic needs as settlers began filling southwestern Pennsylvania's hilly lands. Southwestern Pennsylvania experienced rapid population growth in the 1780s and 1790s as local farmlands filled with new settlers, mostly from eastern Pennsylvania. Situated between Pittsburgh and Wheeling, the town of Washington sat at the center of an increasingly prosperous and productive commercial agrarian economy in Washington County, serving as a local trade and exchange center and as the county's political seat. By the 1810s and 1820s, population growth across rural counties in southwestern Pennsylvania slowed significantly as the frontier continued shifting inevitably westward. In the Upper Ohio Valley, only Pittsburgh, and to a lesser extent Wheeling, achieved significant population growth rates and rapid commercial and industrial development. Outside immigration decreased significantly once the cheap arable lands were already claimed, with slow-growing farming communities and small towns typifying settlement in southwestern Pennsylvania.

In 1800, the town of Washington, Pennsylvania, was not much smaller than Pittsburgh, and it had a comparable number of craftsmen. But within just a few years, with the crucial advantage of its location at the headwaters of the Ohio River, Pittsburgh began to rapidly outstrip Washington and all other southwestern Pennsylvania towns in terms of population growth and economic development, with only Wheeling, downriver and across the border in the Virginia Panhandle, as a serious nearby competitor for regional dominance. As Pittsburgh quickly became the largest city in southwestern Pennsylvania, Washington grew at a much more leisurely pace, but remained the second largest town in the state's western counties between 1810 and the

1870s. It is notable that Pittsburgh dwarfed Washington, but Washington's population advantage over its nearest competitors, such as Greensburg and Uniontown, the county seats of Westmoreland and Fayette counties, respectively, was marginal. Washington was, at least among comparable nearby towns, merely first-among-relative equals, making it a rather typical town in terms of its population levels.

Washington Borough, like other small southwestern Pennsylvania towns, was far from a stagnant backwater, but conditions that were largely beyond the townspeople's control appear to have stunted their chances for urban greatness. One fundamental and increasingly obvious reality by the early nineteenth century was that the western frontier had passed well beyond southwestern Pennsylvania and was growing more distant every year. With the most favorable local farmlands already claimed and abundant, cheap, arable land available further west, and with significant industrialization largely confined to Pittsburgh, there were few incentives for westward-bound migrants to settle in a small, slow-growing town in the Keystone State instead of planting themselves in more rapidly growing areas in Ohio and beyond. Furthermore, western Pennsylvania was part of a long-established eastern state, with commercial interests and a state government that were quite often far more responsive to Pennsylvania's eastern needs than its newly settled western portions. Unlike small towns in new western states in the early and middle nineteenth century, there was virtually no possibility for such places on Pennsylvania's western side to host important statewide institutions that could help spur a town's growth. As historians such as Don Harrison Doyle and Carl Abbott have observed in newly founded Midwestern states in the nineteenth century, town boosters had grand, and often grandiose, ambitions for rapid growth and development, believing that the fresh environment offered virtually unlimited

possibilities, from capturing state capital status, to attracting state hospitals and other institutions, to dominating regional trade and industry.⁶

By contrast, southwestern Pennsylvania small town boosters and entrepreneurs could never hope to achieve such ambitious goals, as Washington's case indicates. It is striking that there was no coordinate, systematic, active booster effort aimed at town aggrandizement in Washington Borough between its founding in the 1780s and the post-Civil War era. There were, to be sure, occasional editorials in the local newspapers that lauded the town's positive attributes, and a smattering of booster rhetoric from entrepreneurs and local agricultural societies, but no coordinated effort existed to purposefully expand the Borough into a true city until well after the Civil War.

The National Road's route through Washington Borough gave it a rather unique feature among small southwestern Pennsylvania towns, with only Uniontown in neighboring Fayette County, to Washington's southeast, the only other county seat in Pennsylvania through which the National Road ran. As advantageous as the National Road could be for local businesses, ranging from dry goods merchants to wagon repair shops, it was not a sufficient stimulus to singlehandedly transform a small town into a bustling city. Indeed, both Uniontown and Washington remained slow-growing country towns even during the Road's heyday between the 1820s and 1840s, whereas Pittsburgh, without the National Road but connected to three navigable rivers, continued its rapid transformation into a full-fledged city. Even along its path through Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, the National Road was not known for transforming small western towns into large cities. The town of Lancaster, Ohio, perhaps indicates the limited benefits to a small town from road connections compared to water-born transportation. Slightly

⁶ Don Harrison Doyle, *Social Order in a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870* (1978; repr., Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, Illini Books edition, 1983); Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen: Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981).

smaller than Washington with a population of about 1500 in 1830, Lancaster was off the National Road's route but had direct access to the Ohio & Erie Canal, its population expanding 114 percent and totaling almost 3300 by 1840. By comparison, Washington Borough's population in that same decade only increased from just over 1800 to 2062, a relatively paltry 13.4 percent gain. Although the National Road did stimulate local businesses by providing a steady customer base for a variety of goods and services, Washington Borough was a way station, not a destination for most westward traveling migrants, and the path that brought people into town took them out of it just as quickly. In a post-frontier region like southwestern Pennsylvania, the National Road was not an avenue to rapid urban growth, particularly after railroads began operating in the region in the 1850s.

Although Washington Borough was a slow-growing country town until after the Civil War era, it is important to note that by the 1820s, the surrounding county was on its way to rapidly becoming the largest wool-producing county in the nation, ultimately enhancing both the town and county's commercial links to the larger regional and national economies. Beyond wool, Washington County also became a leading crop producer, outstripping neighboring southwestern Pennsylvania counties in a variety of commodities by the 1840s, including corn, wheat, and oats. As export-oriented commercial agriculture grew in importance and the National Road brought a steady stream of westward-bound migrants down Washington's Main Street between the 1820s and 1840s, the Borough's businessmen took important steps in developing local institutions to meet the town and county's increasingly complex economic needs. Rather than focusing on growing their town in absolute terms, Washington Borough's leading entrepreneurs and civic-minded elites between about 1810 and 1870 seem to have turned their attentions to making their town as commercially developed and market-oriented as possible,

while still maintaining their view strict of social order. By the 1810s, Washington's entrepreneurial leaders were involved in a variety of projects designed to promote local economic activity, for example constructing turnpike roads and creating banking institutions, although it is important to note that banks and other corporate entities rarely met with unanimous public approval.

Washington's case indicates that small, slow growing towns in the early and middle nineteenth century were often well-connected to the rapidly expanding Market Revolution, which was fundamentally altering the nation's economic patterns and creating a sort of modern, money and credit based, distant-market capitalist system. Washington's transition to the market economy did not happen overnight, but instead, traditional patterns like bartering, home production, and formal apprenticeships for young would-be craftsmen, persisted at least somewhat into the antebellum period. But by the 1820s, transportation improvements, banks, and national tariff policy were already perennial local economic concerns, a pattern that accelerated over time. Protecting the county's commercial agricultural interests and developing the town into a first-rate local exchange and financial center, while maintaining the town's strict moral and social character, seems to have been the Borough elites' top priority as the nineteenth century unfolded.

Washington's case represents a counterpoint to Pittsburgh's rapid growth and development and shows that the Iron City is not representative of Pennsylvania's southwestern corner in the nineteenth century. Rather, Washington Borough more closely approximates the region's typical town experience. By the 1850s, Pittsburgh was a relatively large city with a demonstrable working class, a high proportion of foreign immigrants, a large industrial and manufacturing base, and a powerful financial sector, at least by the Ohio Valley's standards, and

these crucial characteristics set the Iron City distinctly apart from every other Upper Ohio Valley town except Wheeling. Conversely, Washington's relatively modest size, overwhelmingly native Pennsylvanian and Protestant population, small-scale craft, merchant, and financial operations, and intimate associations with commercial agriculture were far more common.

Washington's history from late eighteenth century through the immediate post-Civil War period shows remarkably strong patterns of economic, demographic, and institutional continuity despite the growing influences from the market revolution between the 1810s and the 1850s, and the Civil War's political earthquake in the early and mid-1860s. Industrialization's absence in small western Pennsylvania towns, particularly in the context of a slow-growing post-frontier region, kept any serious population pressures at bay in Washington Borough, and its strongly native Pennsylvanian and Protestant population shared similar cultural and social patterns, helping to maintain and reinforce a relatively high degree of stability in local society. Even though many individuals left town after a relatively brief residency, other native Pennsylvanians replaced them, perhaps contributing to a degree of underlying social stability despite high individual turnover in residency, particularly among those with little or no property. Similarly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the town's leadership class also demonstrated strong continuity patterns throughout the time period, with many early-established elite families remaining at the center of town affairs into the 1870s, although their ranks were augmented by propertied and credentialed newcomers who made Washington their permanent home.

The town's business and professional men were never grandiose in their vision for the town's future, but they were greatly concerned about maintaining and enhancing its overall economic viability, and for these men, perhaps nothing was as important over the long term than first-rate transportation links to facilitate trade and commerce with the nearby cities of Pittsburgh

and Wheeling, as well as more distant markets, particularly Philadelphia and Baltimore. Even in the 1810s, new turnpike links to Pittsburgh to the north and the Monongahela River to the east were high priorities, and transportation concerns culminated later in two separate railroad projects to link the town with Wheeling and Pittsburgh. It is arguable that the town's entrepreneurial class saw market connections as their ticket to continued local prosperity, and it is interesting that in road and railroad booster rhetoric, such as it was, there was rarely any talk of attracting industry to the Borough. Rather, emphasis was always placed on facilitating local links with the regional metropolises, not joining their ranks. It is difficult to prove that Washington's elites had no burning desire to turn their town into another Pittsburgh, but given their provincial religious and social patterns, as well as their apparent realism about regional conditions, it seems that Washingtonians were concerned more with qualitative town development rather than absolute growth; a smaller, orderly, sober, industrious, native-born Protestant town was preferable to a large, semi-chaotic, drunken, frivolous, immigrant-filled and Catholic-tinged city.

Washington's experience with the market revolution before the 1870s was significant, but still limited in scope and impact. For instance, the transportation revolution was manifest in local turnpike corporations, the National Road, and later railroads, but these connections did not produce any decisive local economic or demographic shifts. Two turnpike road corporations founded in the 1810s, the Washington & Pittsburgh Turnpike Company and the Washington & Williamsport Turnpike Company, are examples of the small-scale developmental enterprises so common in the early nineteenth century, in which local capital and leadership were central to financing, planning, and constructing its transportation improvements, and financial profit was far less important to investors than the indirect benefits expected to accrue from better road

connections. The National Road which opened locally in 1819 has already been noted as an important asset to the town and county, and it presaged the trend towards large-scale internal improvement projects that transcended local influence and authority. The Borough's economy undoubtedly benefitted from the steady stream of migrants who passed through the heart of town while on their journey to lands further west, with merchants, craftsmen, and innkeepers providing all the goods and services that travelers might need, from groceries and dry goods to wagon repairs. But the National Road did not significantly transform the town itself; there was neither a population boom nor a significant industrial expansion. The proposed Washington and Pittsburgh Railroad in the 1830s represented the town's continued move towards cooperation with a large urban neighbor to construct a private transportation link, something seen again in the 1850s with two cooperative railroad projects in the 1850s, the Hempfield Railroad, in which Washington's business leaders worked with Wheeling and Philadelphia, over Pittsburgh's objections, to construct a direct link between the Pennsylvania Railroad and the gateway to southern Ohio at Wheeling, Virginia. When Pittsburgh capitalists could not derail the Hempfield, some hoped to revive the old Washington and Pittsburgh Railroad, which was in fact resurrected as the Chartiers Valley Railroad in 1853. Washington's railroad experiences between the 1830s and 1850s demonstrated that local capital and planning was insufficient, that outside forces played an increasingly significant role in determining an improvement's chances for success or failure, and that railroad costs were exponentially higher than mere turnpike roads. Indeed, construction and debt servicing costs were so high the Hempfield Railroad only built half its line before it financially exhausted itself, and the Chartiers Valley Railroad abandoned its efforts altogether within a few years, remaining incomplete until 1871.

The pitfalls accompanying high finance in the new capitalist system made themselves clear to Washingtonians in the late 1850s with the county's so-called railroad tax to service the interest on the bond issue used to finance the county's subscription to the Hempfield Railroad, a cost which the public believed would be borne by the railroad. The spontaneous and widespread revolt against the railroad tax can be interpreted as a rear-guard action by pre-capitalist republican beliefs and values. The anti-tax activists held localized and countywide meetings and conventions that frequently and overtly made allegations that the Hempfield had deliberately deceived the public and county officials, attacked corporate entities and concentrations of economic and political power, and drew on the American Revolution and the Whiskey Rebellion for justification in their stance against the tax. Despite their decisive defeat in the courts by 1860, only the Civil War's beginning finally squelched the last die-hard anti-tax activists.

The town's business and professional elites, along with their compatriots from other parts of the county, were also predominant in local politics, providing leadership at local conventions, serving as delegates to state or national conventions, and standing as candidates for most political offices. These established local notables retained their political influence and leadership positions through the democratically-oriented Jacksonian period, into the antebellum and wartime years, and beyond. For instance, David Acheson, Alexander Reed, and Absalom Baird, all up and coming town leaders before 1800, saw their sons rise fill their leadership status. Alexander W. Acheson, Colin and Robert Reed, and Thomas and George Baird, for example, all filled important leadership positions in local business, politics, education, church, and voluntary associations.

Like towns and cities across the nation, Washington hosted voluntary associations that addressed various local concerns, from bedrock issues like firefighting, to agricultural

development and social reform activism. Moral and temperance societies existed in Washington by the 1810s and 1820s, but they were never overtly partisan organizations. Rather, Washington's temperance activists always cast the issue in moral and community terms, not as a partisan wedge issue, and their political activism focused on drawing support across the community, not from a particular political party or ideology. The precise extent to which moral reform and temperance activity can be attributed to the market revolution's impact, as opposed to the socially conservative Protestant value system that dominated local culture, is impossible to determine, but it is likely that market forces were a catalyst for religious-based social reform activities. In the 1790s, for example, local distilleries were common and uncontroversial, but by the late 1820s, temperance activists were targeting them for elimination; something had clearly changed, and it is possible that proliferating taverns and inns along the National Road, which stretched across the county and ran directly through Washington Borough, had sparked a reaction from pious locals who feared their nefarious influences. In the 1850s, Washington's temperance activists worried about liquor consumption among railroad construction crews in the county, suggesting a link between the market revolution's growing local impact and temperance activism by the antebellum period.

Washington's political evolution was linked to economic issues as far back as the 1790s Whiskey Rebellion, which resulted in the Federalist Party's collapse in Washington County and much of southwestern Pennsylvania. Like white Americans nationwide, Washington's bedrock secular value system was rooted in a staunch republicanism, and it is perhaps advisable to view the Whiskey Rebellion as an attempt to defend their republican rights from what they believed to be legislative tyranny rather than chalking it up frontier rowdies. From the post-Whiskey Rebellion days into the post-Civil War period, competing republican visions vied for dominance

across the count and in Washington Borough. By, Washington County, including its political seat and central commercial town, strongly supported Jefferson and the Democratic-Republicans, and by the 1820's, it was strongly pro-Jackson. The Anti-Masonic party rose briefly in the early 1830s to challenge Democratic-Republican dominance, but it quickly gave way to the Whigs. With their support for banking, protective tariffs, and state-sponsored internal improvements, the Whigs quickly became an effective political party in Washington County, and by the 1840s a delicate countywide political balance existed, but with many individual townships and boroughs maintaining heavily lopsided loyalties. The Democracy maintained an overall predominant position in Washington Borough, although it could not be considered overwhelming, with opposition candidates sometimes polling majorities. With the Whig collapse in the mid-1850s, the Republican Party quickly rose in its place, standing on old Whig economic policies and opposing slavery's expansion in the western territories, an essentially economically-oriented, not morally-based, anti-slavery position. Republican electoral success in Washington County mirrored the party's rise in Pennsylvania and the free western states, and it enjoyed widespread local success in the 1858, 1859, and 1860 elections, although the Democrats were by no means utterly routed. Indeed, large pockets throughout the county, including Washington Borough, maintained Democrat majorities.

Historians have also contested the Civil War's impact on American social, economic, and political patterns, not only on the South, but on the Union states and the nation as a whole. Once considered an important economic turning point, historians like J. Matthew Gallman have convincingly demonstrated that the war's fundamental impact on antebellum patterns was marginal at best, and Washington, Pennsylvania, offers strong evidence to support Gallman's

thesis.⁷ Despite its emotional intensity and the bitter political battles between Unionists and Copperheads, the Civil War did not bring fundamental change to Washington Borough or the surrounding county. While cities like Pittsburgh and Wheeling attracted large government contracts and hosted significant army encampments, daily life in Washington Borough and its surrounding county was not impacted to any corresponding degree. Few Borough firms attracted war contracts simply because there was very little manufacturing in the town large enough to capture war production contracts. The county's vast wool production was already well established, and although the war may have made the Union Army a new customer, it did not result in a surge in local sheep herds or significantly alter wool production patterns. Similarly, the war did not alter established political trends, with old partisan rivalries simply reaching new levels of abuse and invective. The town and county's efforts to provide extra food, clothing, and other amenities to its soldiers were met through the pre-war patterns established by voluntary associations. Likewise, there was no significant social change resulting from the war. Gender norms remained entrenched in the separate spheres doctrine, and women's contributions were channeled into appropriate venues, such as the Ladies' Aid Society, the Christian Commission, and the Sanitary Commission. African-Americans also remained after the war basically where they had been at its beginning, disenfranchised politically, marginalized socially, with fewer economic opportunities than their white neighbors. At war's end, the political, economic, and social patterns from the antebellum era quickly reestablished themselves.

Local wartime politics transformed from a tentative partisan truce in 1861 to open warfare by mid-1862, with a strong Copperhead movement criticizing virtually everything about the Union war effort by 1863, including Lincoln's alleged abuses of power, slave emancipation, conscription, and holding Republicans responsible for every battlefield setback encountered. In

⁷ J. Matthew Gallman, *The North Fights the Civil War: The Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1994).

return, local Republicans, calling themselves the Unionist party by 1863, shot back by accusing the Democrats of disloyalty and treason, and wartime tensions sometimes spilled over into spontaneous violent acts and confrontations. Although Copperheadism, draft resistance, and anti-war sentiment may not have reached the same proportions that historian Robert M. Sandow found in his study of Pennsylvania's Appalachian mountain region, it was powerful enough that it invites a reassessment about southwestern Pennsylvania's wartime politics. By 1865, virtually everything in local life had taken on political overtones, but the intense war-related partisan anger mostly subsided by 1870 and Democratic versus Republican sparring returned to less dramatic policy issues, like tariffs and bank policy. Local manufacturing continued its small-scale patterns after the war, with no large-scale enterprises until about 1880 and the oil boom, and completing the Chartiers Valley Railroad and the Hempfield Railroad's branch east of Washington Borough soon became local priorities again. Voluntary associations turned away from soldier aid and back to local community concerns, including a revived temperance movement by the 1870s. As a small town without significant industry, and located far from the seats of war, Washingtonians found their established patterns and institutions sufficient to meet the war's demands without having to resort to experimentation or innovation. Indeed, the Washington of 1870 had the same fundamental character that had defined it in the century's early years.

The period between the frontier era's conclusion and the industrial age's dawn, roughly from 1810 to 1870, was a slow transition into the modern capitalist economic-political system and the altered society that accompanied it. Without rapid population growth or industrial expansion, Washington Borough did not experience the pressures of a swift transformation or the sharply disruptive side-effects from the encroaching market revolution. Instead, the slower

adaptation and evolution to new market forces and modern capitalism, coupled with a relatively high degree of social homogeneity, allowed the town to maintain a strong demographic, social, and economic continuity until at least the 1870s. After the oil, glass, and steel industries began appearing in the Borough by about 1880, the long period between the frontier and factory eras finally came to a close, and the town was plunged headlong into the modern industrial age and the swift transformations that accompanied it. Rapid population growth, significant immigrant groups, large corporations, and full integration into the regional industrial economy perhaps transformed Washington more fully in less than twenty years than the town had changed in the preceding half century or more.

As is so often the case in nineteenth century small town history, source materials are incomplete and fragmented, but sufficient primary sources still exist to help reconstruct at least a basic assessment of Washington's overall characteristics and trends during this period. Archival materials at the Washington County Historical Society, the Learned T. Bulman '48 Historical Archive and Museum at Washington and Jefferson College, and the Citizens' Library together contain several invaluable collections of personal papers and letters, rare period books and pamphlets, and the two most important Washington newspapers from this era, the Reporter and Examiner. Together, these newspapers provide crucial detail about community life and events that would otherwise be entirely lost, including the activities of voluntary associations, the proceedings at political meetings, church activities, and even letters to the editor by people who may have left no other written records. Other archival repositories, including the Pennsylvania Historical Association, the Thomas and Katherine Detre Library & Archives at the Senator John Heinz History Center, and the Pennsylvania State Archives also contain important pieces to Washington's puzzle. Additionally, census data, local tax records, and other government

materials and statistics also contribute greatly to understanding Washington's characteristics and conditions. Together, the available fragments from Washington's history between its frontier days and its full-scale industrialization reveal a town and surrounding county growing and developing at a relatively leisurely pace compared to so many other communities where market forces and/or war produced rapid and intense shifts in economic, social, and political patterns.

Urban history has shed new light on early American social, economic, and political development, and the small town has as valuable a contribution to make as the large city. Washington, Pennsylvania, provides another case to compare with other nineteenth century small town histories, demonstrating broad continuities with regional characteristics and participation in national trends, while simultaneously offering, like all towns, its own unique attributes. As a small southwestern Pennsylvania town without immediate and profound disruptive influences tearing at its existing fabric, Washington maintained much of its insulated and somewhat provincial society even as it increasingly merged into the new capitalist economy and then sent its sons to war to suppress the Rebellion.

Chapter 2: Foundations of Washington, Pennsylvania

Introduction

On September 8, 1881, as national attention focused on President James Garfield, recently wounded by an assassin's bullet and fighting for his life, the celebration of Washington County, Pennsylvania's, centennial reached its grand finale. The county seat, also named Washington and hosting the occasion, was awash in a sea of flags and banners. A crowd assembled outside the town hall at two o'clock that afternoon to enjoy choral performances and the public reading of letters and telegrams of congratulations, including a message from Secretary of State James G. Blaine, a Washington native, who regretted his absence due to the President's critical condition. A grand parade was the afternoon's main event, led by honorary grand marshal John Hoge Ewing, the venerated 84-year-old local elder statesman, whose father had been a close friend of the town founder's sons, John and William Hoge, almost a century earlier. Following Ewing were several fire engines, a local militia company, a formation of Union Army veterans, carriages filled with local luminaries, and several musical bands, including one from Wheeling, West Virginia, and another from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. After snaking through the borough, the parade ended in a large grove just outside town, where crowds heard orations on the county's glorious history by a series of speakers. Washington Borough was illuminated at twilight, by electricity in some parts, and a massive fireworks display launched from the high hill west of town, much to the audience's delight.¹ A century of progress had been duly commemorated.

Although Washington Borough's people could not know it, their celebration was a symbolic starting point in a distinct new stage of development. Washington Borough's evolution between the 1780s and the mid-twentieth century is divided into three basic phases; the first

¹ *Washington Evening Reporter*, September 9, 1881.

phase encompassed the post-Revolutionary days to about 1820, when the county and town had only a relatively small number of inhabitants and most attention was focused on building the rudiments of a functional community and economic base; during this period the town's basic demographic, economic, political, and social structures were formed.

The third stage of development was characterized by the heavy industrialization that began in the 1880's and lasted into the post-World War II era. With Washington's rapid growth in manufacturing and mineral extraction in the late 1800's, it quickly became an integral part of the larger Upper Ohio-Monongahela Valley industrial belt anchored around Pittsburgh, and to a lesser extent, Wheeling, West Virginia. As Washington became fully integrated into the regional industrial system, the town's social structure changed as well; the wage-labor working class swelled in numbers, dwarfing the old craft and artisan-based workforce, the immigrant presence in local society swelled, and the traditional elites who had once been the town's foremost entrepreneurs and social leaders were marginalized in the face of the new corporate industrial-economy. Oil drilling made rapid advances in the 1880s and with the wells came machine shops, boiler works, tank factories, and other support activities; in 1887, the first of several glass plants opened, and the first steel mill opened in 1896, to be followed another in 1902, when the British steel firm Jessop opened a specialty plant in the borough.² In 1910, the town's two largest employers, Hazel-Atlas Glass and the Tyler Tube & Pipe Company, had a combined workforce larger than the borough's entire population in 1850.³ By the early twentieth century, it was obvious to any observer that Washington Borough's industrialization in the preceding thirty years represented a distinct new phase in the town's history.

² *Washington Reporter*, October 3, 1910. This date's newspaper was an extensive commemorative edition celebrating the centennial of Washington's incorporation as a Borough.

³ *Ibid.*

But oil derricks, glass plants, coal mines, and steel mills did not simply appear in the late 1800's suddenly or randomly; rather, they appeared as the result of a slow transformational process since the frontier period's passing in the century's first years. Between the frontier and factories was the second phase in town development, in which Washington was a relatively stable and prosperous community that in many ways represented a model of republicanism in which independent small-scale producers dominated the economic landscape and a jealous guarding of constitutional protections and individual rights were concomitant with development and growth. Local affairs were still guided by an elite class with long-term residential persistence, church and civic leadership, entrepreneurial tendencies, and noticeable economic prosperity.

By the early nineteenth century, the frontier days were quickly becoming a memory. In 1800, the county boasted 28,298 inhabitants, making it the most populous in Western Pennsylvania, while the town of Washington, although still not officially a borough, had grown to about a thousand residents, making it Western Pennsylvania's second largest town, outstripped only by Pittsburgh/Allegheny City.⁴ By 1820, the county and town populations stood at 40,038 and 1687, respectively, making both second only to Allegheny County and Pittsburgh in western Pennsylvania.⁵

After 1800, the frontier was becoming more physically distant all the time, and Ohio's statehood in 1803 was a clear sign that western Pennsylvania's frontier days were all but finished; locally, the county's best arable lands were quickly filling up with homesteaders, and

⁴ Boyd Crumrine, *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania, With Biographical Sketches of Many of its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: H.L. Everts & Co., 1882), 475. Although Pittsburgh and Allegheny City were legally separate municipalities, they constituted one continuous area of urban and industrial development, and they are therefore treated as a single entity; all references to Pittsburgh thus include Allegheny City unless explicitly noted otherwise.

⁵ Crumrine, *History of Washington County*, 475.

small villages and hamlets dotted the hilly countryside. The town of Washington, situated at the hub of a rudimentary local road network near the county's center, was officially incorporated into a borough by the state legislature in 1810. By 1820, with the opening of the National Road to Wheeling, Virginia, and beyond, Washington, Pennsylvania, became an important rest and resupply point on the ever-lengthening road to the western frontier. A constant stream of customers worked to the town's economic benefit, as small-scale merchants and craftsmen supplied migrant settlers, in addition to the townspeople and surrounding rural dwellers, with the goods and services they needed. A stable core of local elites provided leadership and continuity in local business, politics, and society, and they sought to maintain republican institutions, ensure an orderly community, and secure the basis for current and future prosperity.

Washington in the early 1800s was, as Robert Wiebe describes in his seminal work, *The Search for Order*, one of the many island-communities spread out across the United States, semi-autonomous in its own economic, social, and political affairs, but becoming progressively more interconnected with growing regional and national structures and trends over time.⁶ By midcentury, it was clear that this island-community was fully on the path towards a new, modern, and altogether different existence than the quiet, orderly, subdued small town that was Washington in the 1820s, or for that matter, the 1850s, but until the late 1800s, the town retained much of its original character. Washington Borough and its surrounding county up to the 1870s fit Wiebe's description of an insulated, socially self-contained, relatively stable pre-modern society. As a slowly growing country town rather than a rapidly transforming boom-town, Washingtonians faced far less immediate pressure from market forces and its related agents of change. As Wiebe notes, small towns in rural areas were typically drawn into the economic orbit of larger neighbors, or even distant cities, but "they still managed to retain the sense of living

⁶ Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), 2-4.

largely to themselves. ...Usually homogeneous, usually Protestant, they enjoyed an inner stability that the coming and going of members seldom shook.”⁷

Although the celebrants at the 1881 Centennial could not know it, their commemoration itself symbolized and demonstrated how modernization had already laid the foundations for the town and county to fully merge into the market-capitalist economic, social, and political system then maturing nationally. Most obvious is modern technology’s presence, with railroads, the telegraph, and electric power all present in the Reporter’s account of the day’s events.⁸

Technological advancement and the organizational changes that accompanied it were crucial aspects of modernization, but perhaps as important was its intellectual underpinning. The belief that progress was real, desirable, and obtainable was a mindset among nineteenth-century Americans that encouraged technological and organizational experimentation and changes, especially in the context of the maturing and expanding market-capitalist economy. The Washington County 1881 Centennial was not an event to mourn what had been lost; rather, it was a celebration of what had been achieved regarding modernity, and Progress itself was the true hero that day. The public celebrations, as well as the letters and editorials published in the local newspaper, make it apparent that modernity was highly prized, with special satisfaction expressed in the use of applied technology, economic development, and educational advancements. In self-appraisal of its century of political existence, Washington County’s people congratulated themselves that so much had changed; the frontier days were a second-hand memory, and the people boasted a profitable commercial agriculture, multiple railroad links, stable financial institutions, and an expanding industrial sector. Secretary Blaine, in particular,

⁷ Wiebe, *Search for Order*, 2.

⁸ *Washington Evening Reporter*, September 9, 1881.

lauded the county's education system, which provided the basis for both a sturdy public and exceptional leaders.⁹

The only criticisms of Washington County appearing in print focused on things that had not yet been done for improvement and progress. The chief criticism leveled by the Reporter, one of the town's newspapers, targeted the local roads' poor condition and the lingering opposition to railroad expansion in some parts of the county."¹⁰ The Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette was far more critical, publishing an extended letter mocking Washington County's centennial celebration as much ado about little, and its history as a record of stunning underachievement. Blessed with advantages in natural resources and location, Washington County should have been "an empire unto itself," the Commercial Gazette opined, but its record was one of wasted opportunities. Continuing its criticism, the editorial charged that the county "manufactures next to nothing and buys back her own wool and grain after they are elsewhere made into cloth and flour," before driving the point home by comparing Washington County to the backwardness of "Carolina 'tarheels' or Georgia 'crackers.'" "¹¹

Although the 1881 county centennial celebrants focused on the achievements and progress since the frontier days, few seemed to notice that their traditional social demographics and community patterns had survived relatively intact up to that point, demonstrating an underlying continuity that had persisted up to that point, but which soon gave way under the deluge of industrialization. Indeed, by the late 1870s and early 1880s, Washington had reached a crossroads. The well-developed but still rural county possessed a well-developed export-oriented agricultural sector, facilitated by railroad links and banks. As the county's railroad hub and financial center, Washington Borough still served as a focal point for local trade and

⁹ *Washington Evening Reporter*, September 8, 1881.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid. The *Reporter* reprinted the *Commercial Gazette's* comments.

commerce, but its manufacturing base remained rooted in traditional small-scale enterprises. Market forces and modernization had made important inroads into Washington's economy, society, and politics by the 1870s, but the impact was still more evolutionary than revolutionary. Although a revolutionary transformation had not yet occurred in Washington, the market mindset and institutional framework were preparing the way for it.

Washington's 1881 county centennial celebration reflected the modernist mindset's growing influence, placing a premium on technological prowess, economic development, and urban growth. Washington's adoption of this value system was even more apparent in the 1910 centennial celebration of the Borough's incorporation. The *Washington Reporter's* special commemorative edition, for example, overflows with the urban-booster language of progress, growth, and modernity far more explicitly and directly than in its 1881 commemoration of the county centennial. Page after page chronicled the town's, and to some extent the county's, growth and development since the early nineteenth century, boasting of its railroad connections, banks, factories, schools, churches, civic organizations, and population growth. Indeed, the 1910 centennial commemorative edition even included an article frankly titled "Talk About Washington," which exhorted readers to do their civic duty and proselytize the city's accomplishments, advantages, and opportunities to all visitors during Centennial Week.¹² While recounting the town's rise in the past century, the editors also unashamedly used the 1910 Centennial edition to boost Washington's image as a place of business and commerce. Some articles reminded readers of the town's long involvement in banking, with the implication that this meant experience and reliability, while others pointed out the rise of manufacturing since the town's incorporation a century earlier, as well as the vast mineral resources locally available.¹³

¹² *Washington Reporter*, October 3, 1910.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Indeed, in 1910, Washington Borough could claim to have overcome much of the Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette's 1881 criticism about its economic underachievement.

In the century after the county's 1781 birth as a political body, the sparsely populated village in the frontier wilderness named for General Washington transformed from a semi-autonomous and relatively isolated community to an integrated part of the emerging market-orientated industrial capitalist system. This modernization process was already at work in the fledgling United States by the late eighteenth century, particularly in the growing network of towns and cities in the tidewater East, and its presence in the West was accelerating over time, bringing frontier and post-frontier regions into direct and regular contact with settled and developed areas, and speeding the West's own growth.

Washington Borough's transformation from a small post-frontier community at the time of the National Pike's opening there in 1819 to the threshold of full-fledged industrialization and integration into the burgeoning regional and national socio-economic network by the 1880s provides a valuable case study in nineteenth century town development. There was no inevitability in the town and county's evolutionary path, but rather, it was a combination of local aspirations and responses to larger regional and national forces, and those responses include deliberate decisions made both individually and collectively, which helped determine local conditions in a region experiencing rapid growth and development.

Washington County Created

By the mid-eighteenth century, the European scramble to control the Upper Ohio Valley was already well under way; for decades, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and French Canadian traders had been competing for business with the region's Native American tribes, including the

Shawnee, Delaware, and Mingo. French attempts to solidify their position by constructing a string of forts south from Lake Erie in the 1750s, was the source of consternation for the English colonies, particularly those with western ambitions. Fort Duquesne in particular, at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers, was anathema for the Pennsylvania and Virginia colonials, as it bolstered French control of the region's three navigable rivers, and Virginia's clumsy efforts to assert their claims with a show of military force under Colonel George Washington helped precipitate the French and Indian War.

The 1763 Treaty of Paris killed Bourbon expansionism in North America. Despite London's official ban on white settlement west of its Proclamation Line, colonial settlers, primarily from Pennsylvania and Virginia, continued to migrate into the Upper Ohio Valley. There was no certainty to the region's political future; both the Pennsylvania and Virginia governments claimed it within their rights, and some private groups sought to form an entirely new colony there. After the French and Indian War, a group of New York land speculators hoped to secure London's blessing to establish New Wales as a separate colony in the Upper Ohio Valley region, while a group of colonial traders, mostly Pennsylvanians, formed the Indiana Company with its own designs for a new colony.¹⁴ During the Revolution, some local settlers lobbied to form a new state, to be called Westsylvania, but the Virginia and Pennsylvania claims to jurisdiction were ultimately the only two realistic contenders. No action was taken on the issue until late in the Revolutionary War, when in 1780, after lengthy and contentious negotiations, the two states agreed to a boundary in which Pennsylvania received the lion's share of the disputed lands by the Mason-Dixon Line's westward extension toward the Ohio River, but on condition that all land titles previously acquired through Virginia would be legally

¹⁴ Solon J. Buck and Elizabeth Hawthorn Buck, *The Planting of Civilization in Western Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1939), 156-157.

recognized. In compensation for its ceding of so much land, Virginia retained possession of a narrow strip along the Ohio River's east bank extending more than 70 miles north of the Mason-Dixon Line, which was later divided into the Virginia counties of Hancock, Brooke, Ohio, and Marshall, and commonly called the Northern Panhandle.¹⁵

The Pennsylvania colonial government had already organized its western territorial claims into the vast new county of Westmoreland in 1773, and after the 1780 settlement with Virginia, the state began to subdivide the western lands within its borders. In 1781, the first new county in the United States since its Declaration of Independence was erected in lands partitioned from Westmoreland's western portion and named Washington in the General's honor. Between 1781 and 1796, Washington County in turn ceded territory to create parts of Beaver and Allegheny counties, and all of Greene County, but ultimately retained more than 850 square miles within the so-called Great Horseshoe formed by the Monongahela and Ohio Rivers, both of which were navigable.¹⁶

The whole of Washington County is squarely within the Appalachian Plateau, adjacent to what ultimately became Pennsylvania's southwest border with Virginia. The Appalachian Plateau's most visible topographic characteristic is the presence of almost ceaseless hills and valleys, with relatively few large, flat tracts. It is underlain by sedimentary rock, including shale, sandstone, limestone, and vast quantities of bituminous coal, and is also well hydrated with a myriad of rivers, small streams, large creeks, natural springs, and extensive groundwater supplies. The town and county had relatively easy access to the Monongahela River on the county's eastern border, and the Ohio River, which flows north and west of the town and county, and provided the most rapid and reliable route of transportation to the East before overland

¹⁵ Ibid, 169-170.

¹⁶ Crumrine, *History of Washington County*, 13-14.

internal transportation improvements began in the early nineteenth century. The region's topography, although often difficult, was not sufficiently rugged to prevent inward migration, sustainable agricultural pursuits, and the construction of man-made transportation enhancements, including roads, bridges, and railroads, all of which were vital to growth and development in the nineteenth century.

The Town's Formation

When the first European settlers began to arrive in significant numbers just before the Revolution, the Native American population in the Great Horseshoe area between the Monongahela and Ohio rivers was already sparse, particularly after Dunmore's War in 1773-74. Local tradition in the mid-nineteenth century held that small permanent Indian camps were scattered through Washington County at the time of its official creation in 1781, but Boyd Crumrine, a local attorney and founding president of the county historical society, casts doubt on the claim in his 1882 History of Washington County. The only confirmed Indian settlement in the area, according to Crumrine, was Catfish Camp, which was not a village or settlement, but simply the residence of the aging Delaware warrior, Tingoqua, or Catfish.¹⁷ On June 19, 1769, Martha Hunter, Abraham Hunter, and Joseph Hunter, Jr., each obtained land warrants for slightly more than 330 acres on and adjacent to Catfish Camp. Abraham Hunter's parcel was the southernmost of the three, and it included the spot on which old Catfish had supposedly lived, prompting him to retain the name Catfish Camp for his holdings; Joseph Hunter boldly named his property Grand Cairo, and Martha Hunter, with the northernmost parcel, called her land Martha's Bottom because it was at a lower elevation than the others. There is apparently no evidence that any of the Hunters lived on these properties, and on April 26, 1771, David Hoge,

¹⁷ Crumrine, 20.

from Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, purchased all three tracts. Hoge was not a man of pedestrian means or connections; rather, he was from an influential, relatively prosperous and well-connected eastern Pennsylvania family, and he had already achieved some political success by serving as Cumberland County sheriff between 1768 and 1770.

Hoge did nothing with these tracts until a proposal for a new county to be carved from Westmoreland progressed through the state legislature in 1780, when he moved quickly to plat a town on his Catfish Camp and Grand Cairo parcels, with the apparent intention of having it declared the new county's political seat.¹⁸ In addition to its central location within the anticipated county, Hoge sited his proposed town on the Catfish Camp-Grand Cairo property for other reasons. Even in 1781, it was astride an East-West road, and the few local roads, such as they were, converged on it from multiple directions, making it a natural site for county government.¹⁹ Moreover, the site was made more suitable for a town because the hills were not prohibitively rugged and multiple natural springs could provide adequate fresh water, one of which was apparently envisioned for public use in the original plat.²⁰

Hoge constructed a log house in early 1781, and in March, his surveyor cousin-in-law David Redick laid out a rectilinear plat on parts of the Grand Cairo and Catfish Camp parcels. Located roughly 25 miles south-southwest of Pittsburgh and the headwaters of the Ohio River, 30 miles east-northeast of Wheeling, Virginia, and 20 miles west of the Monongahela River, the new town was imposed upon the hilly terrain that typifies the area. Embraced on the south and west by Catfish Run, a tributary to the Chartiers Creek, which in turn feeds the Ohio River, the town occupied the hills north and east of it, with Market Street (later Main) as its primary North-

¹⁸ Crumrine, 476.

¹⁹ *Washington Reporter*, October 3, 1910.

²⁰ Joseph F. McFarland, *20th Century History of Washington County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Richmond-Arnold Publishing Co., 1910), 454.

South axis, and Wheeling Street (later changed to Beaux) as the central East-West transversal. Although first named Dandridge, Hoge quickly changed his mind and called it Bassett Town in honor of his kinsman, Richard Bassett, a prominent Delaware patriot and politician, and future delegate to the Constitutional Convention.²¹ American town-founders frequently named their seedlings in honor of great cities or national heroes to symbolically express their aspirations to greatness, such as New Philadelphia, Ohio, or Jackson, Illinois. Given the fact that Richard Bassett was a prominent patriot during the Revolution and a major figure in Delaware politics afterwards, and Hoge's relative to boot, it is understandable that the new town would bear his surname. But the name Bassett lacked instant recognition, particularly so far from Delaware, whereas the county's namesake, George Washington, was universally recognized and revered, and synonymous with heroic dynamism. Accordingly, about seven months after the town's founding, Bassett Town was again re-christened, this time as Washington, the third town in the United States to be so designated.²²

The whole area, including the town's site, was heavily wooded, with only a small clearing near the anticipated plat previously burnt off by Native Americans to provide a grassy area for wild game hunting.²³ Washington attorney William Darby, in 1845 at the age of 71, recalled that in the early 1780's, "the site where Washington now stands was a vast thicket of black and red hawthorn, wild plums, hazel bushes, shrub oaks, and briers; often I...picked hazelnuts where the court house now stands."²⁴

²¹ Crumrine, 479, 477.

²² Earle J. Forrest, *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania*, 3 vols. (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1926) I, 830. The others are Washington, Georgia (1776) and Washington, North Carolina (1780).

²³ Alfred Creigh, *History of Washington County: From Its First Settlement to the Present Time* (Harrisburg, PA: B. Singerly, 1871), 129.

²⁴ Ibid.

Washington County made its legal debut on March 28, 1781, and the state legislature ordered that county court sessions be held at the Hoge house, effectively making his Bassett Town site the county seat.²⁵ Hoge deeded one lot each to George and Martha Washington, but according to the *Washington Daily Reporter* in 1933, the General never visited the town, and it is unlikely that he even knew about the lots.²⁶ General Washington did briefly visit the county in September 1784, traveling from the Monongahela River to the town of Canonsburg, seven miles north-northeast of the town of Washington, and then to adjacent Mt. Pleasant Township, where he met with squatters on lands to which he had held title under a Virginia land grant since 1775.²⁷ At the meeting, the General offered to sell the land, but the squatters staunchly rejected his terms, allegedly prompting a torrent of frustrated profanity, and ultimately legal action, from the future president.²⁸ Washington's final visit to the county was, of course, in 1794 when, as President of the United States, he rode at the head of a 10,000-man force to squelch the Whiskey Rebellion, and this did, apparently, sully his reputation among many locals for some years afterwards.

George Washington never visited the Pennsylvania town named in his honor, and similarly, its founder, David Hoge, never made it his permanent residence; indeed, in 1785 he sold the bulk of his local holdings to his sons, John and William, who purchased the remainder just two years later. The lands were formally patented to the Hoge brothers in 1788, by which time they were extending the town's plat to the east and south. Unlike so many land speculators

²⁵ Crumrine, 476.

²⁶ McFarland, 454.

²⁷ Creigh, 100.

²⁸ *Washington Daily Reporter*, August 15, 1933.

further west during the late nineteenth century, the Hoge brothers remained in the town as active citizens, helping to shape its early character.²⁹

The town of Washington was thus founded by a small-scale land speculator who hoped to capitalize on southwestern Pennsylvania's burgeoning frontier population and the creation of Washington County by purchasing a thousand acres in a central strategic location between two navigable rivers, platting a town at the hub of a rudimentary road network, securing county-seat status, and then apportioning individual lots to arriving settlers. No time was wasted in offering 268 lots for sale by certificates, which included provisions of a nominal quit-rent and a promise to build a house of at least eighteen feet square, complete with a brick or stone chimney, by October 1784. Between March and October 1781, forty-seven certificates had been issued, and people began to migrate to new Washington. Set off on the west side of the grid's center was the "public square," which would soon house the county courthouse and jail, the sheriff's office, a market house, and a fire engine house. The town's growth anchored around Main Street and the public square, and the blocks around them soon sprang up with businesses, residences, churches, and schools.

Washington County's abundant and relatively cheap farmland attracted a steady flow of settlers across its domain, helping to spur population growth in the county seat as well. In 1810, when Washington was incorporated as a borough, the town's population stood at 1310, and the entire county at just over 28,000.³⁰ The temperate climate, fertile soil, abundant rainfall, and crazy-quilt network of creeks, streams, and springs combined to abet a variety of agricultural pursuits on an adequate subsistence level, and soon on a limited commercial scale, contributing greatly to the area's early attraction to Eastern settlers. The greatest single landscape change in

²⁹ McFarland, 454.

³⁰ *Washington Reporter*, October 3, 1910; Department of the Interior, *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1883), 76.

both the town and wider county from the initial settlement to the 1870's was the clearing of large wooded areas for cultivation, grazing, and human habitation.³¹ The clearing of farmland proceeded quickly enough that even by the 1790's, Washington County's farmers were already a major producer of various grains and corn, much of which was distilled into whiskey, a value-added commodity that was both a local medium of exchange and an export product to outside markets.³² Morris Birkbeck, an English traveler passing through Washington County in 1817, was impressed with its farmlands, noting that the countryside was already marked by "much excellent working dry lands with fine meadows and streams. A valuable district – full of coal and limestone."³³

Indeed, Birkbeck was correct about the county's mineral wealth, particularly coal. All of Washington County sits atop the vast Pittsburgh Seam of bituminous coal, and it was an important resource to local residents as early as the 1790s. From that time, coal was mined from the shallow deposits on the banks of the Monongahela River and the Chartiers Creek, which empties into the Ohio River; for both local consumption and export to Pittsburgh. During his visit to Washington Borough in 1816, David Thomas of New York noted that coal was imported from the nearby town of Canonsburg, and that "it is a reasonable belief...that coal is abundant even under this town.... It would be a matter of calculation whether a steam engine at the mouth of a ...shaft could hoist coal at a cheaper rate than horses could draw it in wagons from a distance of seven miles" from Canonsburg to Washington.³⁴ There were indeed large coal

³¹ McFarland, 119-120.

³² Pearl E. Wagner, "Economic Conditions in Western Pennsylvania During the Whiskey Rebellion," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, Vol. 10, No. 4, October 1927, 197-198, 202; W.J. Hayward, "Early Western Pennsylvania Agriculture," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, Vol. 6, No. 3, July 1923, 181-182, 185.

³³ Birkbeck, Morris, *Notes on a Journey In America From the Coast of Virginia to the Territory of Illinois*, (London: Severn & Co., 1818), 17.

³⁴ David Thomas, *Travels Through the Western Country in the Summer of 1816*(Auburn, NY: David Rumsey, 1819), 74.

deposits under the town of Washington, but its depth and the intervening underground water flow made mining difficult, and a working shaft was not sunk within the borough until 1864.³⁵

In 1788, the town of Washington was partitioned from Strabane Township and erected into a separate township, indicating its rapid initial growth, and according to amateur local historian Boyd Crumrine in his 1882 book, 102 individuals were assessed on the 1789 Washington Township tax roll.³⁶ By the 1790s, Washington was considered prosperous for a newly settled established town, and a good location for aspiring craftsmen and merchants.³⁷ Not only did Washington have political importance as the county seat, but it was an economic hub for most of the county, where farmers could bring their produce to market and purchase supplies and wares. In 1795, Washingtonians constructed a Market House on their town square property to facilitate and expand economic interaction with farmers from the surrounding countryside. Noting the previous difficulties facing both townspeople and their rural neighbors in the acquisition and sale of supplies and farm produce, a public meeting on August 5, 1795 agreed by popular assent that the Market House would enjoy two mornings weekly in which local stores outside the market would refrain from operations in hopes of allowing local farmers and craftsmen a ready market. Town merchants apparently did not mind this small concession since it would bring a large customer base directly into town who would presumably continue shopping after the Market's exclusive hours ended at noon.³⁸

By the 1790s, the town's growth prompted some citizens to seek incorporation as a borough, as witnessed in a 1796 letter to the editor in the *Western Telegraphe*, a recently-established local newspaper, in which an anonymous resident complained about the lack of

³⁵ McFarland, 468; Creigh, 208.

³⁶ Crumrine, 478.

³⁷ McFarland, 455.

³⁸ Crumrine, 478.

municipal government powers to solve the complications associated with the town's growth, noting that a borough government, in addition to having authority to regulate local streets, would have the power to "regulate the market-house, adjust weights and measures, keep the market-house clean...and make provision against...fire."³⁹ The principle objection to incorporation was apparently the fear of increased taxes and that the apparatus of borough government would fall under the influence of a few powerful men.⁴⁰ The growing town was becoming more difficult to govern without effective local administrative institutions, so despite reservations about taxes and concentrations of political power, the argument in favor of incorporation became more compelling over time.

On February 13, 1810, the state legislature conferred borough status on the town of Washington, which had grown to almost 1300 residents and even housed a small college. Testimony to its rapid early development is again provided by visiting New Yorker David Thomas in 1816, who remarked that it "consists of about 100 houses, many of them handsomely built of stone and brick. The streets are paved. The tops of chimneys are generally formed of white sandstone resting on bricks, which gives them a neat appearance." Thomas also noted that as the county seat, "courts for Washington County are held in this town, and the great number of roads that center to it give some idea of its importance." Thomas also observed a steam mill with three runs of stone operating in Washington, fueled by coal imported from the nearby town of Canonsburg, and he speculated that coal was probably underneath Washington Borough also, ruminating about whether a mine could be opened there to supply coal more cheaply.⁴¹ At the time of its incorporation, the town population stood at 1310, making it the second largest town in southwestern Pennsylvania after Pittsburgh, and home to a chartered college and bank, and a

³⁹ Crumrine, 496. The *Western Telegraphe* newspaper is no longer extant.

⁴⁰ Creigh, 130.

⁴¹ Thomas, *Travels Through the Western Country in the Summer of 1816*, 73-74.

variety of small business enterprises. Although the original 1810 assessment records are no longer extant, the *Washington Reporter's* 1910 centennial edition lists occupations the borough's 139 assessed tradesmen, indicating that almost three-fourths of these men worked as building tradesmen, in clothing and textiles, furniture making, wagons and transportation, and as merchants and innkeepers. The clothing and fabric sector, including shoemakers, tailors, hatters, and weavers, made up the largest portion of the tradesmen at 20.1%, followed by merchants and building tradesmen, at 13.9% and 12.9%. The town's pattern of small scale economic players focused on serving both the local population and passing migrants would persist largely intact until the 1880s.⁴²

As Washington County entered the nineteenth century, wool quickly became the most important commodity produced in the agricultural sector, providing local farmers with a valuable new export product. Popular legend credits Washington townsman Alexander Reed with transforming wool into a massive commercial enterprise with introduction of Spanish Merino sheep to the county around 1820. Indeed, in one of its celebratory editorials commemorating the 1881 county centennial, the *Reporter* noted that Washington County wool was still their agricultural trump card, fetching a million dollars on the market annually, gleefully adding that "we boast the first premiums of the world on fine wool."⁴³

It can be argued that Washington's incorporation a borough in 1810 symbolically drew its frontier and early settlement phase to a close. The community that had emerged in the first three decades of settlement was in many ways typical of a small Pennsylvania rural town. Physically and spatially, Washington bore many hallmark characteristics of what cultural geographer Wilbur Zelinsky called the Pennsylvania Town archetype.

⁴² *Washington Reporter*, Oct. 3, 1910.

⁴³ *Washington Daily Evening Reporter*, September 7, 1881.

According to Zelinsky, the strict rectilinear spatial design in Pennsylvania towns through the mid-nineteenth century that mimicked Philadelphia's plat were an essential component of the Pennsylvania Cultural Area (PCA), anchored in the state's eastern parts. Geographer Pierce Lewis similarly argues that southeastern part of the state is where the Pennsylvania character and culture first formed, and when its people began settling west of the Appalachians, they took their social norms, including a strict Protestant ethic, to their new communities.⁴⁴ The population in the PCA developed a distinct regional culture by the eighteenth century, and as Pennsylvanians migrated over the Appalachians they took their spatial patterns with them. Zelinsky argues that the quintessential Pennsylvania Town, although laden with local idiosyncrasies, was a "dense aggregation of spatially mixed functions in regionally distinctive structures, closely spaced and often built of brick, set along a...rectilinear lattice of arboreal streets and...alleys, frequently focused on a diamond-shaped central square."⁴⁵ Maps and lithographs of Washington demonstrate its congruence with Zelinsky's observations, with the Philadelphia-like rectilinear plan including a system of alleys, densely congregated buildings with a variety of functions and an apparent random order, save for the business-oriented Main Street, which traversed the town on a north-south axis. Although lacking a central diamond, Washington did have a town square of sorts, set off to Main Street's west side at its central point.

That Washington County and the town should be so heavily populated with native Pennsylvanians is expected, for, as geographer Peirce Lewis observes, several key passes through the Appalachian mountain chain originate in eastern Pennsylvania, allowing easy movement of its people, ideas, and cultural patterns to the commonwealth's western half beyond.

⁴⁴ Peirce Lewis, "American Roots in Pennsylvania Soil," *A Geography of Pennsylvania*, E. Willard Miller, ed. (State College, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 1-2.

⁴⁵ Wilbur Zelinsky, "The Pennsylvania Town: An Overdue Geographical Account," *Geographical Review* (Vol. 67, No. 2, April 1977), 138.

An 80-mile wide gap in the Appalachian barrier in south-central Pennsylvania was particularly useful in allowing eastern Pennsylvanians, as well as some others, to cross the mountains with relative ease as they began to transplant themselves, their ideas, and their institutions to the state's western half and beyond.⁴⁶ It is not surprising that Washington fits Zelinsky's Pennsylvania Town design pattern since its founders and a vast majority of its early inhabitants were native to the PCA itself, and it is natural that they would rely upon familiar patterns as their town took form between the 1780s and early 1800s. Studying town plats from before 1870, when external influences began to be more keenly felt in Pennsylvania town designs, Lewis concurs with Zelinsky that the most common spatial characteristic is the basic Philadelphia-style rectilinear plan, widely adapted across the commonwealth, even in relatively small towns like Washington, although there was a variance in their individual idiosyncrasies. According to Lewis, the archetypal Pennsylvania town was not primarily designed to enhance a sense of close community like a New England town, but to foster economic utility, and as he succinctly notes, "the business of a Pennsylvania town was business –to trade goods and make money."⁴⁷

The town's Pennsylvanian-styled spatial design was of course a reflection of its founders, the Hoge family, and their surveyor David Redick, all of whom who hailed from Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. Indeed, it is consequential to the town's character that an overwhelming proportion of its inhabitants were native Pennsylvanian from its founding in 1781 until the late 1800s. Washington did not have a significant sized immigrant population at any point before its third stage of development began in earnest during the 1880s, and even those hailing from other states were in a distinct minority. Similarly, although the black population numbered over two

⁴⁶ Lewis, "American Roots in Pennsylvania Soil," 1-3, 35.

⁴⁷ Lewis, 7.

hundred by mid-century, their direct influence on shaping the town's character and development was, unsurprisingly, quite limited.

Early- and mid-nineteenth century Washington shared many social, economic, and political characteristics with towns in both the New England, other mid-Atlantic, and Midwestern states, as well as their fellow Pennsylvanians on the eastern side of the mountains, but as a new community in a newly settled area of an eastern-oriented and long-established state, they had a distinctly different sense of place and identity from long-established eastern Pennsylvania. Indeed, historian James Kehl argues in *Ill Feeling in the Era of Good Feeling* that western Pennsylvania in the early nineteenth century formed a distinct region, different from both the eastern half of the commonwealth and its western neighbors in Virginia, New York, and Ohio, not only because of settlement patterns, but just as importantly because Pennsylvania's legal codes created a unique set of incentives that differentiated western Pennsylvania from neighboring western states, particularly in their bias against debtors, who were endemic to developing areas and hindered by the commonwealth's bias towards creditors.⁴⁸ With the bulk of Western Pennsylvania's population concentrated in the southern counties, Washington County, and the town were in the heart of the western Pennsylvania region, and it reflected the prevailing western identity.

Early grumblings about separate statehood for western Pennsylvania never gained significant political traction and died out after 1815, but the area continued to harbor an inferiority complex toward the more populous, wealthy, and powerful eastern side of the state, often expressing particular criticism for Philadelphia and its major influence over state

⁴⁸ James A. Kehl, *Ill Feeling in the Era of Good Feeling: Western Pennsylvania Political Battles, 1815-1825* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1956), 19-20.

government.⁴⁹ Eastern Pennsylvanians, on the other hand, did not share a Western identity and did not consider their state to be in any sense a part of the West, adding to the east-west tensions within the state. Moreover, the town of Washington, like all its neighbors, quickly found itself overshadowed by Pittsburgh's comparatively rapid growth after 1800 and the accompanying regional political and economic dominance; there was absolutely no chance for smaller western Pennsylvania towns to host even the western branches of state institutions. Dwarfed by both the state's powerful eastern interests and the more locally influential Pittsburgh, not to mention neighboring Wheeling, Virginia, Washington's town boosters were much more subdued and modest than those so often seen in the Midwest; rather than billing itself the "Athens of the West" or by some other lofty moniker, Washington's booster rhetoric and aspirations were more focused on avoiding a collapse into insignificance rather than becoming the leading regional urban center. If Wheeling, Virginia, even had a chance at supplanting Pittsburgh as the Upper Ohio Valley's central metropolis, the comparatively puny town of Washington, Pennsylvania, was not even a contender, and its citizens were quick to realize this immutable fact; quality local institutions and development would by necessity have to trump absolute expansion, and certain defensiveness seemed to accompany major issues regarding development and modernization.

Federal census figures between 1800 and 1880 demonstrate that Washington County had the slowest overall population growth rates when compared to surrounding counties of Beaver, Butler, Allegheny, Westmoreland, Somerset, Fayette, and Greene, and this relatively sluggish rate could help explain the defensive-oriented booster efforts led by elites in the county seat; indeed, limited growth in the surrounding county threatened to stunt the Borough of Washington's future prospects.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 50.

Washington, like so much of rural and small-town western Pennsylvania, was firmly rooted in a Jeffersonian-style republicanism, where local and state authority were highly valued, and individual rights and responsibilities were sacrosanct; it prided itself as a community of small producers in which no individual or group held undue influence over the local economy or civic affairs, and in which a belief in prosperity and upward mobility via hard work was central. Even the local elites, who profited the most from the town's economic activity and development, acknowledged a sense of responsibility to act as guardians and caretakers for the general well-being of their community and to create or maintain favorable conditions for prosperity and growth. Socially, republicanism's belief in upward mobility was accompanied by the persistence of a traditional moral economy, in which personal connections were highly valued and financial profit was not to be earned at the detriment to others. Lee Soltow and Kenneth W. Keller, writing in the *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* in 1982, argue that in Washington County in the late eighteenth century, property ownership was fairly widespread among the adult male population, and tenancy was neither a permanent state of affairs nor a necessary indicator of poverty. Moreover, Soltow and Keller find that the presence of non-resident land speculators in Washington County was miniscule, land ownership by residents was pervasive, most tenants-landlord relationships were between locals, a large portion of leases were between parties related by blood or marriage, and about half of landless tenants held some form of taxable property other than real estate.⁵⁰ These patterns are not inconsistent with the republican ideal regarding property ownership, potential upward mobility, and the importance of kinship and community ties, and there is no reason to believe that citizens in the borough of Washington, situated in the middle of a Jeffersonian republican county and region, would diverge from this basic trend. As

⁵⁰ Lee Soltow and Kenneth W. Keller, "Tenancy and Asset-Holding in Late Eighteenth-Century Washington County, Pennsylvania," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (January 1982), 1-2, 12-13, 15.

town dwellers, they complemented the agrarian republicanism of their neighbors with a free-labor type variant in which small-scale craftsmen and merchants should have the opportunity to make a gainful living by the fruits of their labor and accumulate some property, real and/or personal, as they moved through the life cycle.

Even by the 1790s, southwestern Pennsylvania was already showing signs of integration with the growing market economy of the East. Indeed, farmers in Washington County quickly found a marketable, value-added product in whiskey, and its importance to the local economy can be found in the decidedly negative reaction to the Federal government's excise tax on their number one product. Indeed, the Whiskey Rebellion in 1793-94, which had support in both Washington County and the town itself, can be interpreted as the locals' determination to defend their republican rights from a distant national government that was abusing its power almost immediately after acquiring so much additional authority at the Constitutional Convention. The rebellion's collapse in the face of President George Washington's 10,000-man expeditionary force confirmed their defensive attitudes regarding the national government's power generally and the Federalist Party in particular, and helps to explain the enduring and powerful Republican (later Democratic-Republican, then Democrat) influence in county and town politics.

Distrust of Federal power did not, however, translate into total opposition to all things emanating from the national government, particularly when self-interest was involved. In the early 1800s, when the first plans for the National Road were in the offing, Washingtonians largely supported the idea, provided that the Road would route through its lands. Indeed, Albert Gallatin's argument to President Jefferson to route the Road through Washington County rested ultimately on the fear that failure to do so could jeopardize a heavy Democratic-Republican

stronghold that was important in maintaining the party's majority in Pennsylvania.⁵¹ Perhaps with the levers of power safely in the hands of Jefferson's Republicans and an opportunity to use Federal power to their own local advantage, they were more willing to trust Federal involvement. Again, Kehl argues that a strong characteristic of western Pennsylvanians' support or opposition to internal improvements schemes rested largely on whether or not people in a given location expected direct benefit to their own community.⁵²

As in most small towns of the day, the local notables in Washington borough provided a relatively stable group of community leaders who lent continuity to civic, religious, and other institutions, amidst a larger population that was much more transient. By 1800, many of the nineteenth century's most influential local families already resided in Washington, including lawyers, physicians, ministers, merchants, innkeepers, and skilled artisans and craftsmen. Although they collectively held the greatest wealth and took a predominant role in local politics and other institutions, their status did not create a great gulf with the majority of ordinary citizens; rather, they seemed to be conscious of a responsibility to provide genuine civic-minded leadership, at least to the extent to which was necessary to maintain public support.⁵³

It is also worthy to note that Washington borough, like the rest of the county and rural southwestern Pennsylvania, was thoroughly Protestant in confession, and there was a strong spirit of ecumenical amity, or at least tolerance, among the denominations, including Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, and the numerically dominant Presbyterians. Protestant religious institutions were established quickly in the town and they continued to play a central role in local society beyond their basic theological mission throughout the second phase of Washington's

⁵¹ Kehl, 63; Philip Jordan, *The National Road, American Trails Series* (New York: Bubbs-Merrill Co., 1948), 79-80.

⁵² Kehl, 67.

⁵³ Jonathan Prude, *The Coming Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts, 1810-1860* (1983; repr., Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 13.

development, particularly with regards to education and periodic temperance crusades. According to local historian Alfred Creigh, Catholic services were not held anywhere in Washington County until the mid-1820s, and itinerate priests served the sparse Catholic population through the 1830s. Catholics were not present in any significant number until the 1840s, when German, and later Irish, Catholics began to arrive, and even then, their number was paltry compared to Protestant adherents. Despite few Catholics, the institution itself was, unsurprisingly in such an overwhelmingly Protestant area, widely despised in Washington. In 1841, for example, anti-Catholic bias and prejudice exposed itself in the fierce opposition to plans to construct a Catholic church in the Borough.⁵⁴

The most numerous ethno-cultural group in both Washington County and the town itself were the so-called Scots-Irish migrants from eastern Pennsylvania, or less commonly, directly from Ulster or Scotland, and their Calvinist-based Presbyterianism significantly shaped the town's character. Ceaselessly advocating a life of sobriety, strict moral conduct, and hard work, Washington's Presbyterians set the tone for local society, and together with allied Protestant churches, established mechanisms to instill their values on the community, from the Moral Society, which assigned itself the task of enforcing proper codes of behavior in public places, to Washington College, the crown jewel in the town's claims to refinement and sophistication.

Washington's initial phase of development had clearly passed by the 1810s, and a settled community had arisen from old Catfish Camp; republican-oriented local institutions had been created and expanded by the first generation, and the town's second generation was beginning to assume its place in Washington's economic, social, and political life as the forces of modernization began to accelerate. By the time this second generation passed from the scene in the 1870s and 1880s, they had presided over an era in their town's evolution in which local

⁵⁴ Creigh, *History of Washington County*, 191-192.

institutions were increasingly drawn into the orbit of far larger regional and national economic and political trends and networks. Throughout this process, they attempted to adjust to the new opportunities and pressures while preserving their familiar local institutions and social patterns. In essence, as Washington faced the growing pressures of modernization, its people and leaders seemed to be acting mostly in defense of their republican beliefs, local institutions, and sources of economic prosperity, and seeking to maintain an orderly community while dealing with changing circumstances. Washington Borough from the 1810s through the 1870s represents a prime example of Wiebe's island-community, in which the town and its institutions stood at the core and focal point of everyday existence to its inhabitants, but which are also increasingly under pressure from larger external forces, whether economic, political, or even cultural.⁵⁵ To claim that Washington, or any other similar community, was literally isolated from its neighbors would be absurd. There was, to be sure, regular contact and exchange with neighboring island-communities, as well as institutions and structures further afield, but their perceived impact on the town's daily affairs seemed minimal. Instead, local leaders and townspeople believed that they themselves made most of the great decisions which would affect both their individual lives and community at large. It would also be erroneous to assume that all of Washington's relationships with neighboring towns or the surrounding countryside were always harmonious. To the contrary, Washington sometimes found itself engaged in rivalries with the town of Canonsburg, just seven miles north-northeast, as well as conflicts with Pittsburgh, which centered mainly around transportation improvements such as the National Road's route and, later, railroad construction.

Washington's frontier period faded in the nineteenth century's first decade, and by the time the town was incorporated as a borough in 1810, its general social, economic, and political

⁵⁵ Wiebe, *Search for Order*, 3-4.

patterns were largely established. Between incorporation and the 1870s, Washington Borough and greater county built on these early foundations. Local society was anchored around its overwhelmingly native Pennsylvanian Scots-Irish population and their Presbyterianism, backed up by compatible Protestant denominations and small non-Pennsylvania populations that were easily assimilated. A strident republicanism that mistrusted distant Federal authority while simultaneously placing great trust in their own local elites to provide leadership and defend the community's interests defined the political culture even into the post-Civil War years. Local agriculture was already engaged in some commercial export production by the 1790s and expanded to become a major wool exporter by the 1820s, and the early-established economic relationship between Washington Borough and the surrounding county increased in the nineteenth century.

By the 1810s and 1820s, the growing Market Revolution increasingly impacted Washington, slowly building the framework that facilitated full-scale industrialization in the 1880s and 1890s and began the town's third stage in local development. The years between roughly 1810 and 1870, between the frontier and factory eras, was a period in which the market revolution and its attendant impacts grew relatively slowly over time in Washington, and as its people responded to new circumstances, their goal was to adapt, grow, and develop without sacrificing the republican virtues, rights, and practices inherited from their forbearers. The remainder of this study will examine several key aspects of Washington Borough's economic, social, and political characteristics in the town's second stage of development and how the community's leaders attempted to adjust to changing circumstances with the republican-based ideology and organizational forms which they inherited from their forbearers. Washington's political patterns, social organization, and economic development were all evolving from a

powerful republican worldview which the local elites attempted to maintain in the face of new patterns and pressures. The attempt to maintain the town's character amidst encroaching outside forces was central to the town's development throughout the time period. Voluntary associations, small enterprise, and local authority were pillars of Washington's social, economic, and political life, and they were mechanisms through which town leaders hoped to be able to shape their community's future and guide it to a stable, orderly, and prosperous future.

From the town's early years until well into the post-Civil War period, a small core of businessmen, professionals, and successful craft and tradesmen collectively led all major local institutions, including elective office, voluntary associations, church administration, school boards and trustees, transportation corporations, and banks. Their activities were crucial in shaping the town's growth and development from the post-frontier period of the 1810's until full-scale industrialization in the 1880s and 1890s, when outside forces, particularly large-scale corporations. The local elites during this period between the frontier and industrial phases were, perhaps most importantly, expected to both protect the community's interests and republican values as the market revolution and modernization forged ahead.

Chapter 3: The Community Leadership Class

Like Americans generally, Washingtonians rejected Old World-style social relations, particularly aristocratic elites possessing unearned titles, special privileges, vast wealth, and excessive influence in public affairs. A strident republicanism was a defining social and political characteristic in both the town and county, where citizens jealously guarded their rights, liberties, and property, viewing centralized distant authority with skepticism, if not hostility. Their republicanism contained a strong assertive element, as witnessed in the plucky but unsuccessful stand against Federal taxation powers during the Whisky Rebellion of 1793-94. Imbued in the Jeffersonian vision of a community of independent small-scale producers, Washingtonians entrusted their local elites to take a leading role in protecting their interests and promoting the community's general prosperity and well-being. As historian Robert Wiebe observes, American republicanism at the fin de siècle acknowledged the People's sovereignty, but society's leadership class, even small town elites, "expected to enlighten them and decide in their behalf."¹ From Washington's first decades, prominent local men were the driving force behind its growth and development, providing leadership and guidance in social institutions, the economy, and politics. Even in the 1820s and 1830s, when a more assertive, democratically-oriented republicanism emerged to challenge elites and demand greater accountability and more direct participation, Washingtonians still looked to their own established community notables for leadership, expertise, and guidance.

Washington's reliance on its own elites for community leadership was not uncommon. Like its small-town and rural neighbors, Washington was a community of predominantly small independent producers and wage earners in which the economic and social distance between the

¹ Robert H. Wiebe, *Self Rule: A Cultural History of American Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 21.

prosperous and the modest was still relatively small. Even the wealthiest townsmen were small-time players relative to the bankers, lawyers, merchants, and various entrepreneurs in the large cities in both the East and West. A prosperous Washington merchant might live in a fine two-story brick house, but he could never compete with the mansions constructed by big-city Eastern capitalists like the Boston Associates. The Washington merchant or banker might be quite prosperous compared to his neighbors, but he was nothing like the urban entrepreneurs and financiers in New York City, or Pittsburgh for that matter. The small town elites, particularly in recently settled areas, were not so powerful or entrenched, even as a group, that they could easily manipulate or unduly dominate overall local economic or political activity and bend everything to their will. In these small towns, relatively modest population levels, coupled with geographic compactness, meant that people of all social standings had a high chance of at least some economic, social, civic, or political interaction over the course of months and years, which prevented local elites from developing a definitive separateness from the general population. Indeed, ordinary citizens expected their community leaders to act honestly and in good faith on the community's behalf. Washington's leadership class was in that respect a republican meritocracy, where one's position of political and social authority was primarily earned and maintained through one's own efforts actions within the accepted context of republican social, economic, and political values. But in another respect, personal and family connections, church credentials, and some degree of accumulated wealth were the credentials that admitted a man to powerful and influential positions, even in a small town like Washington.

The preponderance of several key characteristics defined Washington's early and mid-nineteenth century elite class. Without implying an order of importance, primary indicators included non-manual occupations, property ownership, long-term residential persistence, service

in public offices, higher education, membership in voluntary associations and a local church, prominent roles in civic events and public meetings, well-connected family roots locally or elsewhere, and intermarriage with other local and regional elites. Additionally, there was a strong tendency for inter-generational continuity among Washington's elite class; many town leaders in the mid-nineteenth century Washington were the sons or grandsons of local notables from the frontier period, an almost aristocratic characteristic within an otherwise republican-oriented elite class. Historian Robert Wiebe argues that during the nineteenth century, traditional social hierarchies were disrupted by the rapidity and intensity of population growth and physical mobility, the established hierarchy in Washington, Pennsylvania, endured largely intact at least until the century's last quarter.²

As historian Paul E. Johnson notes in *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837*, town elites were highly interconnected to both their communities and one another, and their ability to generate wealth for themselves directly depended on the local economy and society, and this holds true in Washington, Pennsylvania as well.³ A thriving community and a strong reputation were both necessary for the town's leaders to maximize their own prospects. Historian Carl Abbott agrees, observing that the most successful elites were continually able to harmonize their own personal interests to those of the community at large, and this was also the case in Washington.⁴ Throughout the period between 1810 and 1870, Washington's elites, while certainly enhancing their own business interests and property holdings, were also careful to cultivate the community's prosperity and well-being,

² Robert H. Wiebe, *The Opening of American Society: From the Adoption of the Constitution to the Eve of Disunion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 131.

³ Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (1978; repr., New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 27-30.

⁴ Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen: Popular Economic Thought and Urban Growth in the Antebellum Middle West* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 5.

taking leading roles in everything from transportation corporations to voluntary associations. Not only did these men exercise control over local institutions, but they tended to have much greater wealth than their ordinary neighbors, and they had a great influence in other peoples' access to it.⁵

At the Washington hierarchy's very top in the period 1810-1870 was a small but fluid core of men made up mostly of attorneys and businessmen, especially merchants. These men were mostly native Pennsylvanians and kinsmen of first generation Washington elites. Like other small town elites, they tended to have limited "interchange with the rich and well-born in other cities, [fashioning] private lives that would protect their exclusiveness and intermarry their young," as Wiebe observes.⁶ These men and their families were, in effect, a stable leadership core at local society's center with a significant degree of long-term continuity. Ranked just below the town's top men were younger merchants and professionals, proprietary craftsmen and artisans, innkeepers, and clergymen, who, in accordance with the prevailing middle class Victorian value system, lent their moral guidance and blessing to the elite's endeavors and aspired to advance themselves over the course of their own lives. Together, as senior and junior partners, they were predominant in virtually all aspects of the town's public life from the early 1800s to the 1870s.

The well-connected Hoge family background has already been noted, but a biographical introduction to a few key players in the town's nineteenth century leadership class can effectively illustrate their patterns, values, and activities. The lives and families of Alexander Reed, Alexander W. Acheson, John Hoge Ewing, Dr. Francis Julius LeMoyne, Thomas M.T. McKennan, and the Reverends Matthew Brown and James Irwin Brownson each demonstrate

⁵ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), 3.

⁶ Ibid.

important aspects in the prevailing patterns of Washington's elite in the early and middle nineteenth century.

Rather more biographical background is available on the Acheson family than most others in the town's early years, and although it is necessary to rely heavily on Judge Alexander W. Acheson's (1809-1890) family history, he cites various family letters and documents, and provides copies of correspondence between his father and the Earl of Gosford in the 1840s. The Pennsylvania Achesons descended from the collateral branch of the Archibald Acheson family, who emigrated from Scotland to northern Ireland around 1604, and as distant scions of the Stuarts, they held a land grant in County Armagh. In 1776, family head Sir Archibald Acheson was granted a peerage, being known afterwards as Baron Gosford, and his descendents raised to Earl after 1806.⁷ According to Judge Acheson's account, the family's first foray into the New World occurred in 1786, purportedly as a result of domestic tension in Ireland. A mere five years after Washington's original platting, John Acheson arrived in western Pennsylvania and embarked in the mercantile business, mostly provisioning the U.S. Army with horses and sundry supplies.⁸ Judge Acheson notes that his maternal great-grandfather was a Belfast merchant who controlled "two ships at sea besides other, smaller craft," which may have helped pave the way for the Acheson brothers' success in the mercantile business in America. Very soon, brothers George and Thomas joined John Acheson in Washington, and all three convinced their youngest brother, David, a mere 18 years old, to make the journey in 1788.⁹

John Acheson died en route to Philadelphia in 1791 of unknown causes, but probably from illness or an injury, and his brother George Acheson returned to the family grounds in

⁷ Alexander W. Acheson, *A History of the Acheson Family on the Paternal Side* (Pittsburgh, PA: S.A. Clarke & Co., 1878), 9.

⁸ Ibid, 9, 13-14.

⁹ Ibid, 12, 21-22.

Ireland sometime in the early 1790s. The brothers Thomas and David Acheson, however, determined to remain on the frontier.¹⁰ Carrying on the business, Thomas Acheson quickly established a solid reputation in both the town and county, and went on to become a commissary general during the War of 1812, possibly thanks to his brother's prior connections with the Army. Thomas' untimely death in 1815 caused widespread public mourning, and a large, solemn crowd gathered in Washington to witness the funeral with its military honors, an indication of the family's already spreading reputation and influence.¹¹ Following John's death, Judge Acheson's father, David Acheson (1770-1851), also carried on the brothers' mercantile pursuits, engaging in business expeditions all along the Ohio-Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans, even having written permission from Spanish authorities to sell his wares.¹² In 1795, in the aftermath of the Whiskey Rebellion, he began his formal political involvement when he was elected Washington County's representative to the state legislature. He was reelected in 1797, and once more in 1804, each time as an opponent of the accursed Federalists. In 1800, he worked tirelessly for the Washington County Republican Committee to see to it that the Federalists received their proper drubbing, which was probably not a particularly difficult task, given the lingering popular anger over the Whiskey Rebellion less than a decade before.¹³ Again, the Acheson family name was expanding its local leadership reputation.

By the early 1800s, Thomas and David Acheson maintained six stores in the upper Ohio Valley, and David, accompanied by his second wife Mary Wilson Acheson, the first having died after less than two years of marriage, moved to Philadelphia in the autumn of 1805 to act as

¹⁰Ibid, 14, 24-25.

¹¹ Ibid, 17.

¹² Ibid, 24-25.

¹³ Ibid, 36-38.

purchasing agent.¹⁴ A year before his brother Thomas' death in 1815, David Acheson returned to Washington with his family, which now included four children, including the future Judge Alexander W. Acheson (1809-1890). According to the Judge's account, his father believed he had accumulated a sufficient fortune to retire from active business, and chose to invest the bulk of his assets in local real estate, spending his surpluses on an increasingly comfortable lifestyle. But as local real estate prices begin to collapse in 1831, David Acheson quickly found himself in dire financial straits, and his assets were auctioned off at a sheriff's sale. The family house in Washington survived the auctioneer only through the financial intervention of David's brother-in-law, Marcus Wilson.¹⁵ Judge Acheson's account does not mention any business activity on his father's part after his financial difficulties, but since he was then in his 60s, it is unlikely that he returned to active business, but rather allowed his sons to be the family's main providers. By this time, the future judge was embarking on his career as an attorney in Washington, and his brother John departed the town in favor of the Arkansas frontier, where he set himself up as a merchant, only to die of an unknown disease in 1833.¹⁶ What is clear, however, is that the elder Acheson had the financial wherewithal by 1840 to take an extended trip to Ireland and England, where he saw his elderly brother George, who had returned to Ireland in the 1790s, as well as their more distant kinsman, the Earl of Gosford.¹⁷

It is clear that the Acheson family was already well-connected and possessed of more resources than the average frontier family, which allowed them to rather quickly carve out a niche in their new homeland in western Pennsylvania. Extant mercantile connections in Belfast,

¹⁴ Ernest F. Acheson, "The First American Home of the Rev. Thomas Campbell" *Christian Standard*, Vol. 33, No. 51, December 18, 1897 (originally appeared in the *Washington (PA) Saturday Evening Supper Table*, April 18, 1891); J.H. Beers, *Commemorative Biographical Record of Washington County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1893), 129.

¹⁵ Alexander W. Acheson, *History of the Acheson Family*, 44-45.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 45.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 51-52.

may have helped the Acheson brothers to quickly form a business relationship with the U.S. Army, which provided them a basis from which to expand their operations in succeeding years. The fact that David Acheson arrived in America with a letter of recommendation from his church attesting to his “sober, good conduct” and the fact that his own father was an elder in the seceding congregation of their Ireland home, confirmed his reliable Protestantism and also illustrates the role that good connections in the homeland could play in a man’s life in a new community, however distant.¹⁸ These were key factors in the town’s elite class well into the nineteenth century.

Another example of a local elite family is that of Alexander Reed (1776-1842) and his sons, Colin McFarquhar Reed (1804-1888) and Robert Rentoul Reed (1807-1864). Born in Scotland, Alexander Reed emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1794, where he joined a brother and uncle in the frontier town of Washington, quickly establishing himself as a successful businessman and agriculturalist. Reed allegedly introduced the prized Spanish Merino sheep to Washington County and sent the first wool exports back to Eastern markets, and is also credited with the early importation and breeding of English horses and cattle in the Washington area. In addition to his agricultural pursuits, Alexander Reed was deeply involved in local civic and educational affairs. Reed was among the founding trustees of both Washington College (1806) and the Female Seminary (1835), and served as president of the local Franklin Bank, a state-chartered financial institution, from its inception in 1836 until his death in 1842. He was also closely involved in establishing the Washington & Williamsport* Turnpike Company in 1818. Politically, Reed served in borough government as a burgess (1810-11, 1816), treasurer (1813-

¹⁸ Ibid, 22.

* Williamsport was the original name of the town of Monongahela, Pennsylvania, located on the eastern edge of Washington County on the west bank of the Monongahela River and not to be confused with the current city of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, in the state’s northeastern region.

15), and councilman (1817), and evolved into a Whig by the 1830s. In his spare time, he was a member in several important voluntary associations, serving as president of the local Moral Society, and was a prominent member and treasurer of the First Presbyterian Church from its official chartering in 1809 until his death.¹⁹

Named for his maternal grandfather, the Rev. Colin McFarquhar, Colin Reed, born in 1804, closely followed his father's path both in business interests and public activities. In addition to owning the only permanently established bookstore in Washington, he was intimately involved in various aspects of Washington's growing business life. Like his father, he was president of the Franklin Bank, served as president of the Washington Gas Company upon its 1857 establishment, was affiliated with the Washington Mutual Insurance Agency, and sat on the Hempfield Railroad's board of directors. He was a long-time trustee and treasurer of the First Presbyterian Church, was a member of both the Moral Society and Temperance Society, and during the Civil War served as Washington County chairman of the United States Christian Commission. Colin Reed demonstrated a commitment to local education by his long-time service as a trustee for both Washington College and the Female Seminary, and his presence on the first board of directors for the borough's Common Schools. Picking up his father's political banner, Colin Reed was also a staunch Whig (he later gravitated to the Republican Party), but he was not known as an "office seeker;" and his only service in local office was as a burgess (1849-50), and a councilman (1851, 1854).²⁰

Robert Reed, like his father and elder brother, was an important personality in the borough's public life, even though he lived most of his adult life a short distance beyond the

¹⁹ J.H. Beers, *Commemorative Biographical Record of Washington County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1893), 129; Alfred Creigh, *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania, From Its First Settlement to the Present Time* (Harrisburg, PA: B. Singerly, 1871), 132-135.

²⁰ Beers, *Commemorative Biographical Record*, 189-191; Creigh, *History of Washington County*, 132-135, 198-200.

borough's legal boundary. Like so many sons of borough leaders, Robert Reed was a Washington College graduate, and he studied medicine locally under Dr. Francis Julius LeMoyne before attending the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. Reed returned to Washington after graduation and began building a career and reputation as a respected physician and wool agriculturalist. A lifelong Presbyterian, Robert Reed eventually became a ruling elder and was the Sunday school superintendent at the First Presbyterian Church for twenty-seven years, in addition to being a benefactor to local education. His service in political office included a single term as a Whig in the U.S. House of Representatives (1849-51) and he sat in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives in 1863-64 as a Republican, and also during the Civil War he was actively involved in various aid societies, even visiting the theatres of war in Virginia before his own death after a short illness in December 1864.

The Reed brothers' marriage choices attest to the pattern of intermarriage between local elites. Colin Reed's first marriage was to the widowed daughter-in-law of Governor Joseph Ritner, who had relocated to Washington County from eastern Pennsylvania years earlier and became the county's only man elected as the state's chief executive. The marriage lasted barely two years due to his wife's death, but their only child, Mary Reed, grew up to marry Henry Laughlin, a founding partner in the Pittsburgh steel giant Jones & Laughlin. His second marriage, to the daughter of a Massachusetts army major, lasted until his death and bore eight children, including Colin Reed, Jr., who in his turn became an important local businessman and political leader.²¹ Robert Reed married Eleanor Baird, daughter of Thomas Harlan Baird, an attorney, businessman, and one of the most influential men in the county, and his own son,

²¹ Beers, 189.

Robert Reed, Jr., was engaged to marry Dr. LeMoyne's daughter before his death from disease in the army in 1863.²²

Business acumen and property ownership, public service and a reputation for civic-mindedness, active support for various community associations, and religious participation were all important hallmarks of the true community elite. Men who filled these criteria could become an integral part of the town's exclusive circles; it was not a closed group. The respect accorded to industrious newcomers is revealed in the *Washington Reporter* in 1856 as it criticized what it perceived as an overall insufficient local emphasis on manufacturing, noting that "what has been done in this line is mainly attributable to the perseverance and enterprise of a few Yankees," favorably referring to the owners of the two most important manufacturing concerns in town, the Frisbie & Hitchcock Foundry and the S.B. & C. Hayes Carriage company. The owners of both firms were New Englanders who had relocated to Washington Borough, and the *Reporter* editor's respect for their entrepreneurial spirit was evident.²³ Although newcomers were adopted into the ranks of the local elite, there was also a strong current of family continuity among them in addition to their shared values. Intermarriage between prominent families was a common occurrence, and as already seen with the Reeds, sons of prominent Washingtonians were regularly groomed to become community leaders themselves. It was common for sons to succeed to local leadership positions previously held by their fathers, especially at Washington College, the Female Seminary, church congregations, civic groups, and business institutions.

Dr. Francis Julius LeMoyne, M.D. (1798-1879), was in many ways typical of the Washington elites, but also unique in some aspects, and his case shows that the elites were not a monolithic group by any means. LeMoyne's father, John Julius LeMoyne, was a French

²² Ibid.

²³ *Washington Reporter*, Dec. 3, 1856.

physician and botanist in the king's employ at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Paris, who witnessed the storming of the Bastille, and later joined a group of French émigrés who fled the growing instability of France for the relative safety of the American frontier in 1793. He settled first in the émigré community at Gallipolis, Ohio, and soon after in Washington, Pennsylvania, where he established himself as an innkeeper, druggist, and physician.²⁴ The LeMoyne family, who would have almost assuredly been Catholic given the elder LeMoyne's position at the Royal Botanical Gardens, converted at some point to the Presbyterian church, possibly for the utilitarian reason of social acceptance in such a heavily Scots-Irish region.

Francis Julius LeMoyne graduated Washington College in 1815 and began studying medicine under his father's tutelage before completing his training in Philadelphia. In 1822, the junior LeMoyne returned to Washington to practice medicine and begin a long public career in which he was instrumental in the development of several major public institutions, including the first local fire company, Washington College, the Washington Female Seminary, and much later in life, the Citizens' Library, which his funding created. Additionally, he was a trustee at Washington College and strongly supported the local common schools. On top of his medical practice, which he maintained into the 1850s, LeMoyne was active in the business realm, serving a director of the Franklin Bank and the Washington Gas Company, and becoming a successful local real estate mogul; by 1860, he was the wealthiest individual in the borough.²⁵ After the Civil War, he gave \$20,000 to the American Missionary Society to create and endow a college in Tennessee for African-Americans, which survives to the present day as LeMoyne-Owen College. In addition to being a physician, businessman, and philanthropist, LeMoyne was also an avid

²⁴ Margaret C. McCulloch, *Fearless Advocate of the Right: The Life of Francis Julius LeMoyne, M.D., 1798-1879* (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1941), 13-14, 19-20; Crumrine, *History of Washington County*, 543.

²⁵ Beers, 7-9; Crumrine, 543-44; Department of the Interior, *Eighth US Manuscript Population Census for Washington Borough, Pennsylvania*, 1860, Citizens' Library Microfilm Collection, Washington, PA.

agriculturalist and became an early member of the Washington Agricultural Society in the 1820s. Even in old age, LeMoyne continued to promote agriculture, for instance serving as president of the National Wool Growers' Association in 1866-67, and donating \$21,000 to Washington and Jefferson College to endow the Professorship of Agriculture and Correlative Branches in 1872. In a further show of support for his alma mater several months before his death in 1879, LeMoyne donated another \$20,000 to establish a professorship of applied mathematics, along with another \$1000 for purchasing equipment. As LeMoyne explained, the "object of this professorship shall be to give instruction in...all the applications of mathematics to the construction of machinery and the practical trades and employments of men," indicating his continuing support for local economic development and his republican beliefs made it part of his civic duty to use some of his considerable resources to support it.²⁶ As a civic-minded, successful physician, agriculturalist, and businessman, LeMoyne was quite typical of the Washington elites, but in other ways he marched to the beat of a different drum.

In the 1830's, LeMoyne became an outspoken radical abolitionist, a highly controversial and unpopular stance in Washington and southwestern Pennsylvania. He was soon the Washington Anti-Slavery Society's leading spokesman, simultaneously emerging as a noted critic of the colonization movement. As an active and much desired speaker on the abolitionist circuit in western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio, LeMoyne quickly established a formidable reputation, and such was his prominence in the anti-slavery movement that Pennsylvania's abolitionist Liberty Party nominated him for governor three times (1841, 1844, and 1847), and

²⁶ Beers, 7; Crumrine, 449; Francis J. LeMoyne to the Washington and Jefferson College Board of Trustees, July 1, 1879. Newspaper clipping, Ewing Collection, Box A-4 Washington County Historical Society Archive (hereafter WCHSA), Washington, PA; George Hayes and Thomas McKennan, Washington and Jefferson College Trustees' Acknowledgement of Receipt of \$21,000 from Dr. Francis J. LeMoyne, July 7, 1879, LeMoyne Collection, Box A-24, Folder 6, WCHSA.

once for Congress (1843). The region's antipathy to abolitionism is reflected in the extremely poor showing LeMoyne made in his home county in each of these elections.²⁷

LeMoyne's strident abolitionism led to another of his controversial moves. Frustrated by what he considered the Presbyterian Church's failure to take a sufficient stand against slavery, he withdrew his membership sometime in the late 1830s or 1840s, never to join another congregation. Despite his controversial abolitionism and his resignation from organized religion, LeMoyne's stature was such that he was always among the town's most influential citizens during his lifetime, and even beyond it.²⁸ In the 1870s, LeMoyne stirred up one final controversy when he constructed the country's first crematorium for the disposal of human remains, arguing that it was the most efficient and sanitary method. The town's reaction was, perhaps predictably, one of disapprobation and rejection, although his scheme did bring some publicity to Washington in the form of newspaper articles and editorials, including several in the *New York Times*.²⁹ LeMoyne's case demonstrates that although there are clear patterns of activity among the town's elite, including educational credentials, occupational classification, accumulation of wealth, political leadership, business acumen, and Protestantism, there could also be significant variance within their ranks.

One of the single most important members of Washington's nineteenth century community leaders was John Hoge Ewing (1796-1887), who was ever-present in most forms of public activity, from business to education, politics, religion, and various civic affairs, in both the town and county of Washington, even well into his eighties when most other men of his

²⁷ Wilkes University Elections Statistics Project: Pennsylvania Election Statistics 1682-2006, Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Election Returns, <http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/gov/indexgov.html>; Wilkes University Elections Statistics Project, U.S. House of Representatives Elections, <http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/rep/indexrep.html>.

²⁸ Beers, 7-10.

²⁹ Beers, 10; *New York Times*, February 16, 1878; *Ibid*, February 19, 1878; *Ibid*, October 17, 1879.

generation were either deceased or in quiet retirement. Like so many other local elites, Ewing had the advantage of a well-connected and prosperous family background to assist his own rise to prominence, and despite his many talents, he was not an entirely self-made man. Ewing's forbearers emigrated from northeastern Ireland to the American colonies in the early eighteenth century, settling in Nottingham, Maryland. His grandfather, George Ewing, was a cousin to the prominent Presbyterian Rev. Dr. John Ewing (1732-1802), a graduate of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton University). Rev. Ewing's illustrious career elevated the family's reputation and enhanced their opportunities; his professional life anchored around his position as minister of Philadelphia's First Presbyterian church (1759-1802) and in the closely related realm of education with a long-standing relationship with the University of Pennsylvania, where he was Professor of Ethics (1758-62) and Professor of Natural Philosophy (1762-1778) before becoming a trustee (1779-1802) and Provost (1780-1802). Rev. Ewing's involvement in educational pursuits extended beyond the university to the American Philosophical Association, which he served as a vice-president. His credentials were again acknowledged and enhanced when he was awarded an honorary doctorate of Law by the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. In addition to his spiritual and cerebral responsibilities, Ewing's activities extended to secular affairs, representing Pennsylvania on the 1784 commission to resolve the boundary dispute between Virginia and the Keystone State, and working with David Rittenhouse in the early 1790s in laying out the Philadelphia-Lancaster turnpike, one of the country's first paved highways.³⁰

Kinship connections to the prominent Rev. Dr. John Ewing certainly assisted the extended Ewing family, including William Porter Ewing, who studied under his second cousin at the University of Pennsylvania prior to becoming a surveyor and relocating in 1790 to

³⁰ Beers, 44; Penn Biographies: John Ewing (1732-1802), University of Pennsylvania Archives & Records Center, http://www.archives.upenn.edu/people/1700s/ewing_john.html.

Brownsville, Pennsylvania, where he kept a farm in addition to his other pursuits.³¹ It is unclear precisely when their relationship was established, but William Porter Ewing was a close friend to his fellow-surveyor, John Hoge, a son of Washington's town founder, with whom he laid out large tracts within Pennsylvania's vast Purchase of 1784, so it is presumable that the two had already established their friendship by the time of Ewing's relocation to southwestern Pennsylvania. William Porter Ewing married soon after arriving in Fayette County, and in subsequent years fathered ten children, including four sons, at least three of whom were college graduates and licensed to practice law. The eldest, George Ewing, migrated to Texas and became a judge in the state court system and a colleague of Sam Houston. The second son, Nathaniel Ewing, attended Jefferson College in nearby Canonsburg, was subsequently admitted to the bar, and in 1838 was appointed president judge of Pennsylvania's Fourteenth Judicial District, comprised of Greene, Fayette, and Washington counties. Comparatively little is known of the fourth and youngest Ewing son, James, except that he remained in Fayette County as a farmer, and held the position of auditor in Luzerne Township in 1841, 1851, 1857, and 1875, and township school board director in 1854 and 1860.³²

The third son, John Hoge Ewing entered Washington College as a student in 1810, boarding with his namesake, John Hoge, a further demonstration of the close connection between the Ewing and the Hoge families.³³ After graduating in 1814, Ewing read law under prominent local attorney Thomas McGiffin just as his brother Nathaniel had done, and was admitted to the bar in 1818, becoming one of McGiffin's junior partners.³⁴ Practicing law was apparently not Ewing's first love, for he soon left the practice to work with his father, who had won a contract

³¹ Franklin Ellis, *History of Fayette County, Pennsylvania, With Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1882), 142.

³² *Ibid.*, 643-45.

³³ Beers, 44-45.

³⁴ Ellis, *History of Fayette County*, 139.

to build a portion of the National Road through Washington County. Ewing never again practiced law, but did act as an informal peacemaker, to whom aggrieved persons brought their disputes for arbitration outside of the legal system, which indicates his reputation's enormous stature.³⁵

Although a licensed attorney, Ewing did not have a single, clear occupation. After leaving the bar, he engaged in a variety of business pursuits in and around Washington, including road construction, a small coal mine, sheep ranching, as well as some small-scale land speculation in Monongalia and Ohio Counties in Virginia, and in Wright County, Iowa.³⁶ Ewing was one of the earliest railroad boosters in Washington County, lobbying (unsuccessfully) for a connection between Washington and Pittsburgh in 1831, and again in the 1850s when the Chartiers Valley Railroad was chartered to create such a railroad link; even in his old age he lent his name and support to the fledgling narrow-gauge Washington and Waynesburg Railroad in the late 1870s. In addition, he was a long-time board member of the Franklin Bank of Washington (PA), as well as a founding member and long-time president of the Washington County Agricultural Society. In addition to his extensive involvement in business activity and internal improvements, Ewing also had brief forays into elected office. Although he never held a borough office, Ewing, a Whig and later Republican, served in the Pennsylvania Senate from 1838 to 1842 and was elected as a Whig to the House of Representatives for a single term in 1845, and served as a delegate to the 1860 Republican National Convention in Chicago.

In September 1862, as Lee's Maryland invasion activated the alarm bells across Pennsylvania, Ewing found himself, aged 66, commissioned as captain of Company F in the 6th Pennsylvania Regiment of Militia, comprised of other relatively elderly volunteers who were

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Tax Receipts from Monongalia County, Virginia, 1859, 1860, Tax Receipt from Wright County, Iowa, 1863. Ewing Collection, Box A-4, WCHSA.

deployed to a defensive position at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, until after the Battle of Antietam.³⁷ Supplementing his political and business activities, Ewing rounded out his public life by consistent involvement in both religious and educational affairs, serving as an elder and trustee in the First Presbyterian church for decades, and becoming a trustee of Washington College in 1834 and of the Washington Female Seminary in 1846, positions which he held until his death in 1887.³⁸

The Acheson, Reed, LeMoyne, and Ewing examples underscore key elements in the local elites, namely, advantageous family connections, educational credentials and business success coupled with attention to social and religious duty, as well as participation in civic affairs. It is worth noting the stark difference in their patterns of political versus private institutional leadership. Washington's elite men were involved in various forms of politics for most of their adult lives, from general activism to office holding, but elite men almost never held any single elected public office at any level of government for an extended period. Brief occupation of any given elected office was part of the republican ethic common to early and middle nineteenth century America; no one should be entrenched in any political office long enough to garner unwarranted influence. As historian Sean Wilentz observes, rotation-in-office at the Federal level in the Jacksonian period translated into removing the losing party's bureaucratic appointees from office and replacing them with the winning party's men, a practice often associated with the so-called spoils system. But as Wilentz points out, there was a sincere reformist impulse behind rotation-in-office which sought to break up or prevent an "insider political establishment" from

³⁷ Beers, 44-45; John Hoge Ewing's captain's commission certificate, issued by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, September 15, 1862, Ewing Collection, Box A-4, WCHSA.

³⁸ Beers, 44-45.

manipulating government institutions.³⁹ At the local level in Washington, Pennsylvania, this ideal was apparent in their tradition of short tenure in office. No man should occupy the same position for more than a few years, lest he become too entrenched and tempted to serve his own interests first. This practice contrasts sharply with leadership tenure patterns in non-political institutions, such as corporate entities, churches, schools, and voluntary associations. Colin Reed, Francis LeMoyne, and John Hoge Ewing all served as trustees and directors of prominent religious, business, and educational organizations for extended periods; all three were long-term trustees at Washington College and the Washington Female Seminary, and all were directors of the Franklin Bank of Washington (and its successor after the 1865 re-organization as the First National Bank of Washington). Reed and Ewing were both trustees of the First Presbyterian church throughout most of their adult lives, with Reed serving as Treasurer for over forty years, and both were also long-time church elders. Private institutions were in an altogether different category than political ones when it came to holding leadership positions, and long term leadership was acceptable, normal, and common.

Thomas McKean Thompson McKennan (1794-1852), son of a Continental Army colonel and born in Newcastle, Delaware, grew up in Washington, eventually becoming the head of his front-bench elite family. Graduating from Washington College in 1810 and admitted to the bar four years later, McKennan soon began an extensive political career serving in a variety of offices and capacities, but apparently only out of a sense of duty and not without considerable distaste for it. After a two-year stint as a deputy attorney general for Washington County, he gained a strong reputation as a skilled and trustworthy lawyer, a sometimes difficult task in southwestern Pennsylvania during the Era of Good Feelings, when many people still had

³⁹ Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2005), 314-316.

reservations about those who represented the new, more formal economic and legal characteristics of the growing Market Revolution, including bankers and attorneys. As McKennan built up his law practice and his general reputation, he served thirteen consecutive years on Washington's town council between 1818 and 1830, the longest continuous tenure of any councilman in the seven decades after its achievement of borough status in 1810.⁴⁰ During this period, he also became a trustee at the First Presbyterian Church, holding the position until 1837 before being re-elected just prior to his death in 1852.⁴¹ In 1830 he was elected as an Anti-Mason to the first of four consecutive terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, where he gravitated to the Whig Party and supported banks, internal improvements, and above all, protective tariffs, a measure which had widespread support across Washington County because of the rapid expansion of wool growing. McKennan refused to stand for another term in 1838 because he wanted to turn his attentions back to his own law practice, which had suffered during his extended absences and attention to political matters.⁴² In 1837, despite pressure from friends to have his name submitted for a district judgeship for Washington, Greene, Fayette, and Somerset counties, McKennan refused. In 1840, McKennan's friends and former Whig colleagues across the state once again urged him to seek public office, this time the Pennsylvania governorship. Thanking them for their kindness and confidence in his ability, McKennan once again rebuffed these overtures, noting that any talk of his candidacy had been without his approval, and that he had already worked "for what I believed to be the public good, without reference to my own personal aggrandizement. I want no office."⁴³ After the unexpected 1842

⁴⁰ Crumrine, *History of Washington County*, 498.

⁴¹ "Plan of Pews in the Presbyterian Church, Washington, PA, and Names of Occupants, January 1, 1861," First Presbyterian Church Records, Box A-51, WCHSA.

⁴² Beers, 99.

⁴³ Thomas M.T. McKennan to unnamed supporters, December 21, 1837, McKennan Collection, Box A-12, WCHSA; Thomas M.T. McKennan to unnamed supporters, 1840, Ibid.

death of Joseph Lawrence, his successor in the House of Representatives, McKennan agreed to return to the House to serve the balance of Lawrence's term, but declined to stand as the district's Whig candidate that year. In 1844, local Whigs and the *Washington Reporter* newspaper attempted to push McKennan for the vice-presidency, but once again, McKennan himself was entirely disinclined to pursue such a course.⁴⁴ In 1848, McKennan's supporters in Washington again proposed that he run for the House of Representatives, only to meet with his rebuff, this time due to his sense of duty to his ailing wife.⁴⁵

McKennan did take on the brief and less onerous task of presiding over the Pennsylvania Electoral College to confirm General Zachary Taylor's 1848 victory in the state, but once again demurred when another significant political post beckoned. Following President Taylor's death in 1850, as the new President Millard Fillmore faced the task of re-staffing the entire cabinet who had resigned en masse, McKennan's friends were eager to see him appointed a department secretary. In a letter written while away from the borough, McKennan revealed to his overeager supporters back in Washington both his personal humility and his aversion for those who intentionally seek out political office. "I telegraphed you today and said, 'do not mention my name!' I have an utter abhorrence to having my name pushed by my friends for any post or position. I have an unaffected diffidence of my ability to filly any Department of the government, and I know that any position in high places would be to me a laborious, anxious, and perplexing one."⁴⁶ McKennan added that he was personally acquainted with Fillmore, and he would only consider accepting an offer to head a department if the president approached him entirely of his own accord and without any pressure having been placed upon him. Despite his aversion to boosters pushing him for office, the pressure to accept a position continued. In an

⁴⁴ *Washington Reporter*, February 3, 1844, February 10, 1844, February 24, 1844.

⁴⁵ Thomas M.T. McKennan to John Hoge Ewing, June 19, 1848, McKennan Collection, Box A-12, WCHSA.

⁴⁶ Thomas M.T. McKennan to unnamed supporters, July 13, 1850, McKennan Collection, Box A-12, WCHSA.

August 9, 1850 telegram from Washington borough, Dr. Robert R. Reed flatly and simply told McKennan that the “entire Whig delegation urges acceptance.” Three days later, Washington County attorney and Whig James Veech telegraphed McKennan saying, “Our people all say you must accept Interior.”⁴⁷ Despite whatever qualms he may have had, McKennan ultimately accepted Fillmore’s invitation to head the Department of the Interior, but found the position so distasteful that he resigned barely one month into his tenure. In the draft of his resignation letter to President Fillmore, McKennan explained that his temperament was ill-suited to the great demands placed upon him as secretary, and personal family considerations had added to the burden to the point that resignation was necessary. McKennan explained that he would not have accepted the position in the first place had it not been for the urging of his many friends and the kindness extended to him by the President and the entire Cabinet.⁴⁸

It is clear through McKennan’s public service record and his own testimony echo the republican ideal that political office was to be a temporary sacrifice made in the public interest, and once that duty had been fulfilled, personal and private considerations should once again take precedence. By 1838, McKennan had held some kind of elective office for over twenty years and believed he had reached the point where public service was no longer his primary duty, and he determined to return to private life, his law firm, and soon the presidency of the fledgling Hempfield Railroad, which would attempt to connect the city of Wheeling, Virginia, to the Pennsylvania Railroad east of Pittsburgh on a route across Washington County and directly through the borough itself.

⁴⁷ James Veech to Thomas M.T. McKennan, Aug. 9, 1850, and Robert R. Reed to Thomas M.T. McKennan, Aug. 12, 1850, McKennan Collection, Box A-12, WCHSA.

⁴⁸ Thomas M.T. McKennan to President Millard Fillmore, August 26, 1850, McKennan Collection, Box A-12, WCHSA.

McKenna's attitude on political service reflects small-town nineteenth century society's ideal, where public office was seen as a temporary duty and a diversion from a man's primary endeavors; it was a sacrifice to be borne in the short run, not a career in and of itself, and certainly not a pathway to personal wealth or other aggrandizement. Men who appeared to violate this ethic were labeled as office-seekers and usually shunned by the electorate. Perhaps it was this fear of stirring public opposition rather than a McKenna-style republican idealism that led Washington's elites to eschew excessive occupation of political offices and often work through party mechanisms or cooperate behind the scenes and to achieve their goals.

As important and influential as the local elites were to Washington's political structure, they neither served long periods in a single position, nor did they personally monopolize local political offices. The borough's basic government structure between 1810 and 1880 consisted of a five-man town council to formulate and adopt ordinances, and two burgesses who shared executive power. The town council's membership list between 1810 and 1880 demonstrates clearly a high turnover rate and lack of councilmen with long, consecutive terms. During this entire 70-year period, only eight men sat on the council for four or more consecutive years, and of those only three served more than five consecutive years. The councilman with by far the longest tenure on town council was Thomas M.T. McKenna, who served from 1818-1830, leaving it upon his election to Congress. As for the two burgess positions between 1810 and 1880, of the 72 annual slots, 59 different men served in that capacity, with one-year stints in the position the most common length of tenure, although past burgesses often returned later for additional one-year terms.⁴⁹

The councilmen's occupational classification also gives some indication of the local elite's place in Washington politics, assuming at least a casual relationship between occupation

⁴⁹ Crumrine, 497-98.

and overall status. Men like the Reeds, Achesons, Ewing, LeMoyne and McKennan, represented the local elite's top tier, they were supplemented by a second tier of citizens who shared many of their characteristics and values, but who had less property and prestige. These men tended to be independent smaller-scale shopkeepers and skilled artisans, including blacksmiths, tanners, furniture makers, tailors, carriage and wagon builders, machinists, grocers, and clerks; they usually owned at least a modest amount of real or personal property, and they tended to be long-term town residents. As historian Don Harrison Doyle notes, there was a powerful bond of common values and aspirations between first-tier town elites, like attorneys, physicians, and merchants, and the proprietary craftsmen who were themselves property owners and stakeholders in the community, although usually to a somewhat more modest level.⁵⁰

The Washington stonemason Freeman Brady offers a case in point to demonstrate that proprietary craftsmen were also sometimes integral to the local elites' network. Born in the late 1790s and orphaned at an early age, Brady was raised in Centre County, Pennsylvania, by his maternal uncle, who taught him the mason trade. Arriving in Washington around 1818 at the time of the National Road's construction in Washington County, Brady won several small contracts and also served as a superintendent for John Hoge Ewing and his father, who were engaged in building a significant portion of the Road through the county's eastern side.⁵¹ With this start, Brady began a career as an important local stonemason, constructing many important buildings, including a new county courthouse and jail in 1840. Brady was prominent in the First Presbyterian Church, a town councilman, an influential local Democrat party leader, and was

⁵⁰ Don Harrison Doyle, *Social Order in a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870* (1978; repr., Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, Illini Books edition, 1983), 225.

⁵¹ Beers, 313.

appointed post master for the borough by President Buchanan in 1857, holding the position until Lincoln replaced him.⁵²

Of Brady's sons, three followed in his footsteps as prominent local stone masons, while the fourth graduated from Washington College in 1851, becoming a telegraph operator before serving as deputy sheriff in 1855 and being elected county recorder of deeds in 1857, the same year his father was appointed post master. While serving as recorder of deeds, the junior Brady studied law under John Loudon Gow and was admitted to the bar in 1860, further advancing his already strong prospects, and his social credentials were greatly enhanced in 1869 upon becoming an elder in the First Presbyterian Church, a prestigious honor for a Washington man.⁵³

A sample of Washington's town council members between 1810 and 1880 shows an occupational distribution that ranges from attorneys, physicians, and merchants to a variety of skilled trades, including coopers, millers, carpenters, furniture makers, masons, a machinist, and moulder.⁵⁴ Perhaps the most striking thing about the list of councilmen is the brevity of tenure in office, which again underscores the crucial ethic in political republicanism that rotation in office is crucial. Between 1810 and 1880, only eight men served on council for four or more consecutive years, and of these, half served for four years, and only one, Thomas M.T. McKennan, exceeded a decade of continuous presence on council with thirteen consecutive years. Further, after 1863, not a single councilman served more than two consecutive years.⁵⁵ Although it was not uncommon for ex-councilmen to subsequently serve again for brief periods after an appropriate hiatus, there was clearly a long term public preference for rotation in office.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Beers, 313-14.

⁵⁴ Crumrine, 498. Sample years are 1815, 1820, 1824, 1834, 1840, 1845, 1850, 1852, 1857, 1861, 1863, 1867, 1870, 1873, 1875, 1879. Office holders' names were matched against various sources to determine an occupation, including secondary sources like the local histories by Creigh, Crumrine, McFarland, and Forrest, as well as primary sources, such as manuscript census data, tax rolls, and newspapers.

⁵⁵ Crumrine, 498.

Further, although the first tier local elites were well represented (over-represented?) on town council, they did not have a monopoly on its seats. Of the 73 different men who served as councilmen during the fifteen sample years between 1810 and 1880, 21 had occupations that were manual by nature, even though most of these men operated their own small businesses and/or owned at least a modest amount of property. Charles Hayes, for example, is listed in census records simply as a carriage maker, but this masks the fact that he was part owner of the S.B. & C. Hayes Carriage Company, the borough's largest employer by the 1850s. Similarly, Thomas Bryson and Thomas McKean are listed in records as a cabinet maker and a tobacconist, respectively, but both were independent proprietors who straddled the line between proprietor and working man.

Two burgesses shared executive power in local government and were elected annually for most of the nineteenth century. Using the same sample years as with the town council, a slightly different picture emerges concerning burgess' occupational distribution that indicates the top-tier elites collectively held a burgess position to a significantly greater extent than did the more modest proprietary craftsmen. Attorneys and merchants alone held 51% of the burgess seats in the fifteen years sampled between 1815 and 1879, and when their group is supplemented by a banker, newspaper co-owner, and physician, this group held 64% of the burgess seats. By contrast, men who made their living working in a craft or service, appear in far fewer numbers. Three carpenters, a blacksmith, tailor, moulder, and a hotel keeper account for the remaining 36% of town burgesses.⁵⁶ Moreover, the sample indicates that after mid-century, the proportion of professionals and merchants holding a burgess position increased relative to men of lesser

⁵⁶ Crumrine, 497-98. Occupational classifications for the burgesses were obtained using the same primary and secondary source types as for town council members.

station, perhaps an indication of a widening socio-economic gap being expressed in political office-holding.

Overall, men of a more elite background tended to have a greater direct hold on the burgess position than they did on council seats, but nevertheless, the overarching trend is that political office holding in Washington, Pennsylvania, from the 1810s to 1880s was a shared responsibility between the first-rank local elites and the more modest craftsmen and shopkeepers. Although people on the social spectrum's lower end tended not to be elected to local offices, neither did the first-rank elites have a clear monopoly on them. Indeed, many of the town's most prominent names from the middle nineteenth century are conspicuously rare or entirely absent from the rolls of local officeholders. Colin Reed, one of the most influential men in the borough, only served one year as a burgess and two non-consecutive years on council, while other elites like John Hoge Ewing and Dr. Francis LeMoyne never held a local office at all.

The elites did not monopolize borough office-holding, but there remains the question of their informal influence over office-holders of more moderate backgrounds, as well as over the political process itself. Local elites were predominant in the borough's political organizations and activities, meetings, and conventions. They typically chaired and led the committee and nominating meetings, as well as other functions, and had influence with the voting public. They did not, however, constitute a monolithic bloc. Rather, the borough elites in the period 1820-1880 were consistently torn by political dissension within their own ranks and rarely held a political consensus, including the Civil War years. Even in the so-called Era of Good Feelings in which the western Pennsylvania Democratic-Republicans had no functioning opposition party, factionalism and competition over policy initiatives, process, and patronage positions produced powerful fissures among borough luminaries.

The so-called Washington Club, formed around 1816 and lasting about a decade, represents an early example of political factionalism and informal behind-the-scenes machinations among the borough elite. The Washington Club was a shadowy informal political alliance anchored around the influential businessman, attorney, and future judge, Thomas Harlan Baird, his merchant brother George Baird, merchant David Acheson, and attorney Thomas McGiffin.⁵⁷ The Club emerged from political cooperation between the Bairds and Acheson in the mid-1810s, particularly in 1816 when Thomas Baird was a candidate for Congress and George Baird was a candidate for the state senate. William Sample, owner and editor of the *Washington Reporter*, the borough and county's primary newspaper at the time, portrayed the Bairds and their allies as office-seeking crypto-Federalists, handmaidens of powerful banking interests, and attempted to further tarnish their image portraying them as tools of nefarious attorneys who manipulate the law to the people's detriment. Perhaps as devastating, Sample's editorials in the *Reporter* charged that his opponents were completely unprincipled men who would shift their public positions to suit their ambitions, a common rhetorical tactic in the period's ongoing political wars. Sample's attacks routinely blasted the Baird-Acheson-McGiffin alliance as unworthy of the public trust, and it resonated with voters. After all, Thomas Baird and Thomas McGiffin were themselves attorneys, and both Acheson and Thomas Baird were on the local Bank of Washington's board of directors, making them suspect to many small farmers and craftsmen.⁵⁸

Both Baird brothers lost their 1816 campaigns, and the Club placed the blame squarely on Sample and his newspaper. In response, they quickly recruited John Grayson, an ambitious young editor from Baltimore, Maryland, to set up a rival newspaper in Washington to serve as a

⁵⁷ George Roadman, "Washington (PA) Newspaper Battles, 1817-1825," *Western Pennsylvania History Magazine*, Vol. 40, No. 3 (1957), 198-99.

⁵⁸ Kehl, *Ill Feeling in the Era of Good Feeling*, 166, 174; Roadman, "Washington Newspaper Battles," 198.

retorical counter to the Reporter. For the next decade the Washington Club waged a relentless cold war against Sample and his allies, using Grayson's newspaper, the Washington Examiner, as their platform. Anti-lawyer sentiments were strong among the county's rural electors, and both Sample and Grayson attempted to exploit this by portraying the other an attorney's propaganda mill. It should be noted that despite strong antipathy in rural Washington county to lawyers in the abstract, these same voters developed trust in well-established local lawyers, frequently electing these men as their representatives in local, state, and congressional seats.⁵⁹ Grayson denied these charges, along with the Club's very existence, but a widespread public feeling that the Bairds and Achesons were then engaged in manipulative politics persisted, and the Club's political success at winning elective office and securing patronage positions for its own men during its decade of existence was apparently marginal. It is ⁶⁰ By the 1830s and the return of party politics, continuous fractures among the elites in local politics were assured, with Democrats regularly doing battle against Whigs, Know-Nothings, and later, Republicans. Indeed the party fracture could be seen in the local press as the Examiner evolved into a staunch Democrat party organ, while the Reporter became solidly Whig, and later Republican.

Besides exposing contentious political rivalries among town elites, the larger lesson drawn from the Washington Club is that behind-the-scenes machinations, however difficult to expose or quantify, were a factor in Washington's nineteenth century political life; alliances were established, shifted, and dissolved; new players entered the fray, and others departed, but throughout the period, despite their own political differences, the town's elites demonstrated significant influence over the political process, and some degree of factionalism and back room dealing was guaranteed. Evidence indicates that Washington's first tier elites had a significant

⁵⁹ Kehl, *Ill Feeling in the Era of Good Feeling*, 176.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 160-61, 166, 175.

presence in local office holding, but shared the stage with a variety of smaller scale artisans, craftsmen, and shopkeepers who were often independent producers, doubtless with their own hopes of upward mobility. Indeed, election to public office was one of the most significant indicators of advancement that a small scale proprietary craftsman or shopkeeper could experience.

In addition to politics, other areas of community life held the elite's attention and involvement. Issues as varied as local economic growth, community standards of behavior, educational opportunities, internal improvements, and social institutions were as important as politics to the town and its future prospects. Interestingly, private institutions and issues provide a stark contrast to politics in the elites' behavior. As noted, when it came to political office holding, the local elites tended to hold particular offices for only brief periods, but when it came to private institutions, both secular and religious, they often held the same leadership positions for many years, even decades. Similarly, it was common to find men of starkly different political affiliations and opinions engaged in intense political competition with one another, sitting on the boards of directors of the same schools, businesses, and voluntary associations, and attending the same churches, sometimes sitting in close proximity to one another.

Even allowing for a degree of competitiveness, it nevertheless underscores a clear delineation between purely political matters and extra-political issues that affected the town's general well-being and prosperity. Despite political competition, men from opposing viewpoints and parties could still find the wherewithal to serve on the same board or sit in the same church as their political rivals. For instance the congregation seating chart of reserved pews at the First Presbyterian Church in 1861 shows Democrat and Republican rivals sitting in close proximity and paying for the privilege. For example, the Democrat Judge John Grayson, editor of the

Washington Examiner from 1817 to 1840, along with his son, Thomas, who had taken over the newspaper, renting a pew directly across the aisle from Robert F. Streat, co-owner and editor of the Republican-oriented Reporter, and directly behind Republican merchant-banker William Smith, whose son was a close personal friend of the as-yet obscure Hiram Ulysses Grant.⁶¹ Even the Reporter and Examiner newspapers, which were locked in ongoing editorial combat over political issues, frequently found common ground on matters concerning internal improvements, economic promotion, support for educational institutions, temperance, and other community issues in which the partisan political element was marginal or absent.

In addition to the preponderance of merchants, attorneys, physicians, and business owners who comprised the bulk of the town's leadership class, Protestant clergymen were a unique part of the local elite in Washington as in countless other contemporary towns and cities. Ministers, especially those at the head of the largest, most prestigious congregations, were held in particularly high regard within their recognized sphere of activity, namely social and spiritual affairs. In addition to their duties as clergymen, local ministers were active in education, public morals and temperance causes, and regularly performed ceremonial duties at a variety of civic gatherings, from graduation ceremonies to public holidays. On no occasion, however, did a minister even attempt to seek public office, nor were they prominent in local business concerns, and on only one occasion, in the late 1870s, was a local minister conspicuously involved in efforts to construct internal improvements. The settled ministers at Washington's nineteenth century churches tended to have a moderate amount of real and personal property, and the ones with the greatest influence and standing tended to remain at their church for a long period. Finally, these ministers tended to marry into the borough's gentry. The Reverends Matthew

⁶¹"Plan of Pews in the Presbyterian Church, Washington, PA, and Names of Occupants, January 1, 1861," First Presbyterian Church Records, Box A-51, WCHSA.

Brown (1776-1850) and James Irwin Brownson (1817-1899) offer appropriate examples of how ministers fit into local society's hierarchy.

Matthew Brown was born near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, in 1776. As a result of his father's death while serving in the Continental Army two years later, he and his brother were raised by his paternal uncle, William Brown, a politically and socially influential man in Dauphine County, Pennsylvania. After being ordained as a minister by the Presbytery of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, in 1799, Brown engaged in his spiritual labors with assiduousness in the east-central part of the state before accepting a call from the First Presbyterian congregation in Washington, where he was installed in October 1805. Brown immediately became the principal at the Washington Academy as well, leading its successful efforts to obtain a charter from the state legislature as a college. He became its first president in December 1806. Upon his 1805 installation as pastor of the First Presbyterian church, Brown found a divided, acrimonious congregation, but succeeded in restoring amity and unity, and earning a powerful reputation in the process. Although Brown's activities as pastor and college president were not without controversy, his career amply illustrates the role of the clergyman in local society; they were men of significant moral authority, entrusted with the townspeople's spiritual, moral, and educational well-being.⁶²

The Rev. James Irwin Brownson demonstrates a similar role as Matthew Brown. Born in 1817 to a respected and well-connected family in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, in the state's south-central region, Brownson began his work as a Presbyterian minister in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, in 1841 before transferring to Brown's old pulpit in Washington eight years later. In addition to holding the pastorate in the First Presbyterian Church for nearly half a century, Brownson was heavily involved in education, taking an interest in the borough's

⁶² Crumrine, 510; Beers, 84.

common schools and serving as a long term trustee at the Washington Female Seminary. Since Washington College (Washington and Jefferson College from 1865) was affiliated with the Presbyterian church, it was natural that Brownson served as a trustee there as well, which he did almost immediately after his arrival. He later became a trustee for the Western Theological Seminary in Allegheny City, and he was prominent in local temperance and public morality efforts and educational endeavors. Widowed soon after his arrival in Washington, Brownson married in 1855 to Eleanor Acheson, sister to attorney and later judge Alexander W. Acheson, Sr. Although the marriage proved long and apparently content and fruitful, it certainly lent additional standing and prestige to the already popular minister.⁶³

Writing a brief biographic sketch in 1886 for the Annals of Washington and Jefferson College, Rev. Henry Woods, a professor of languages at the school (and John Hoge Ewing's son in-law) noted the townspeople's deep appreciation for Brownson's tireless and successful efforts as pastor, educator, and general voice of morality and propriety. Indeed, Woods' account of Brownson's accomplishments focuses entirely on his proscribed role as part of the town's social elite; his life had been spent in service to various spiritual and social endeavors, not to business concerns, internal improvements, or political questions.⁶⁴ Ministers were a powerful force in the local power structure, but their influence was, as with women, limited to an accepted sphere that rarely included political or economic issues.

Although Washington's elite families tended to remain in the borough or its immediate surrounding areas over the long term, some members did, like the population at large, migrate to other towns or regions to seek new and greater opportunities. For example, Dr. Francis LeMoyne's two sons left the borough to make careers in large cities, one becoming a Chicago

⁶³ Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Presbytery of Washington, PA, *History of the Presbytery of Washington* (Philadelphia: J.B. Rodgers, 1889), 97.

⁶⁴ Beers, 74-75.

attorney and the other a Pittsburgh physician. The Acheson family also saw many members migrate to Pittsburgh or the West. Judge Alexander W. Acheson's younger brother, Marcus, established himself in Pittsburgh to practice law in 1852, and was appointed by President Hayes as judge in the U.S. District Court for the Western Pennsylvania District in 1880. The Judge's son, Alexander W. Acheson, Jr., departed for Topeka, Kansas, after his army service in the Civil War, and subsequently moved on to Denton, Texas, where he practiced medicine and later became a candidate for both governor and U.S. Senate. As a young man, even Judge Acheson himself had once made a brief venture into the mercantile business in Kentucky before returning to Washington to study law. Acheson's sister departed Washington with her husband, Joseph McKnight, in the 1850s when he entered the iron business in Pittsburgh. John Grayson, the local newspaperman recruited to Washington by local elites, saw his son Andrew pursue a newspaper career that led him to various cities across Pennsylvania, including Harrisburg, Erie, and Pittsburgh.⁶⁵ Although Washington might represent a home base and familiar community, the elite families did not restrict themselves to the limited horizons it offered, with many members choosing distant places to establish their own lives and fortunes.

As with most recently formed towns, the local elites' ranks were open to new members, particularly new arrivals who brought their credentials, connections, or property with them. In particular, newly arriving entrepreneurs, ministers, professionals, businessmen, and other useful persons could over time, become fully integrated into its membership. For instance, John Grayson, owner and editor of the *Washington Examiner* newspaper, had been recruited by local elites to relocate to Washington as their junior associate in 1818. Over time, Grayson gained admittance to the bar and rose to become a county judge and influential force in the county's Democrat party politics. Attorney John Loudon Gow, born in 1799, left Maine for Washington

⁶⁵ *Washington Reporter*, March 10, 1880.

Borough in 1824, where he was soon admitted to the bar and married himself into the Murdoch family, headed by the patriarchal Alexander Murdoch, an attorney and one of the most influential men in Washington, and also the father of Gow's law partner, Alexander Murdoch, Jr.⁶⁶

Washington's elite had one final overarching characteristic; men were the predominant factor in virtually all areas of community life, whether economic, social, or political. Men ran local businesses, sat on boards of directors at the local banks and chartered schools, served as deacons, elders, and officers in the church congregations, and headed the voluntary associations. During the entire period between the frontier's eclipse early in the nineteenth century and the beginnings of heavy industrialization in its latter period, only one woman stands out starkly as an elite public figure with any measurable influence on community affairs. However, even she could not ignore proscriptions that women's activity should be restricted to the private sphere and appropriate related social causes, leaving the civic, political, and economic spheres to all-male leadership. Sarah Foster (later Sarah Foster Hanna), originally from upstate New York, was principal at the female seminary in Cadiz, Ohio, when she accepted the principal's position at the Washington Female Seminary in 1840. The school was only five years old and still struggling when she took the reins as its second headmistress, and throughout her long career there, she was lauded for effective leadership from administrative affairs to her influence on students, and she held a powerful influence over the school, even relative to its trustees. Even after her marriage to Rev. Thomas Hanna, whom she had met while living in Ohio, and his appointment as the school's superintendent, her leadership was the guiding force, and she frequently managed to overcome the trustees' opposition to her ideas and innovations.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Beers, 36.

⁶⁷ Crumrine, 558-559.

As respected and revered as Sarah Foster Hanna may have been in Washington and among its elites, her gender limited her influence to acceptably female endeavors. For example, when the townspeople grew concerned in the 1840s about the cemetery's long term viability, nothing was done to create a new cemetery in a more favorable location until Sarah Foster Hanna organized a committee comprised of the town's leading men.⁶⁸ Education and spiritual matters were acceptable areas for a woman to make her influence felt, but political matters were altogether different. In a letter to John Hoge Ewing in 1847, for example, Hanna lashed out against the Mexican War, which she considered unjust and immoral. Despite her strong convictions about the war, she could only discuss the matter in a private letter, and there are no records of her opposition being made in a public venue.⁶⁹

Further confirmation of her revered but proscribed status is revealed in Boyd Crumrine's 1882 History of Washington County, in which he wrote biographical sketches on a number of prominent citizens from the borough's history. Crumrine lavishes praise upon Hanna, noting that it was her dedication and effectiveness that made the Washington Female Seminary into a successful school that could attract students from a great distance despite Washington's relative seclusion and the difficulty of travel. Mrs. Hanna's spirit of charity, kindness, and spirituality is the core of Crumrine's outline, reflecting the still prevailing social doctrines on gender boundaries.⁷⁰

Republicanism was a community ethic in Washington borough, as well as the surrounding region, a powerful local elite exercised significant influence over community life, including politics, the economy, and society. Men with wealth, education, business success, political involvement, Protestant church membership, and leadership in local voluntary

⁶⁸ Ibid, 551.

⁶⁹ Sarah Foster to John Hoge Ewing, January 4, 1847, Ewing Collection, Box A-4, WCHSA.

⁷⁰ Crumrine, 205.

associations were the local leadership class' typical patterns. They did not exercise a monopoly on political office, but their influence was also felt informally, and their own internal political divisions prevented them from ever being a monolithic bloc. Beyond electoral politics, the local elite showed a much higher degree of cooperation on issues that impacted the community and its well-being as a whole; internal improvements, educational institutions, and a host of voluntary associations saw men of strikingly different political persuasions or party affiliations cooperating amicably, a factor which will be considered later in greater detail. Newcomers with credentials, wealth, personal connections, and the intention to remain for the long term could work themselves into the elite social and political networks. Washington's leading families also saw frequent intermarriage, a result both of their social familiarity and interaction, as well as a desire for strategic familial alliances to bolster prestige, economic prospects, or political ambitions.

The prevailing community ethic demanded that men in elite positions use their authority for the public good, and anyone suspected of putting his interests first would find himself politically shunned, and possibly to a degree, socially as well. Indeed, one of the most damaging claims that could be made in politics was that a candidate was an habitual office-seeker, a strategy that Reporter editor William Sample used to great effect in the 1818 election cycle, for example.⁷¹ Washington's elites, although in a commanding political and economic position, had to be community-minded and public-spirited if only because the town's growth and prosperity was also their own pathway to enhanced wealth and prestige. Also, they needed sufficient public support to maintain their positions of relative power and influence, and if they appeared to be overtly self-interested, it would damage their overall efforts. These men generally demonstrated their support for local institutions by investing their money in them, holding leadership positions on their boards of directors, and in the case of education institutions, enrolling their children in

⁷¹ Kehl, 166.

them. Even if they were primarily motivated by self-interest, or even self-aggrandizement, Washington's leadership class had a vested interest in promoting the town's overall growth, development, and prosperity. Successful nineteenth century town elites tended to couple their own private interests to the public interest to ensure the long term prospects for both, and this was a pattern in Washington as well. If the community as a whole grew, developed, and prospered, so too would their own business interests, and as they supported various projects, such as railroads, they were always sure to connect it to the public good. It was this leadership group who took a leading role in shaping the town's institutions and character as it grew from a small post-frontier community to a well-established town on the verge of heavy industrialization. Washington's elite class in the early nineteenth century was, in essence, a working model of Jeffersonian republicanism, in which they represented the most stable, prosperous, and prestigious element in local society, but they were expected to act as the community's trustees and guardians to promote economic prosperity, protect people's liberties and rights, and serve as general examples of virtuous citizenship.

Washington County's assertiveness against distant authority had a long precedent, already witnessed in squatters' resistance to George Washington's land claims in Mt. Pleasant Township in the 1780s and the Whiskey Rebellion in the 1790s. At the same time, there was a significant degree of deference to local elites; indeed, into the Jacksonian period, when ordinary citizens became far more active and assertive in political matters and the franchise dramatically expanded, and persisting even to the post-Civil War era, Washington's political elites were not politically overthrown by armies of farmer and craftsmen candidates or levelers. Rather, the elites, both individually and families, retained their political and social influence, continuing to fill most leadership positions in local political offices, church administration, boards of

education, and the various voluntary associations. Deferential politics was eroded significantly at the national and state levels by the 1820s, as Robert Wiebe has observed, but Washington's local-level politics and social leadership remained largely concentrated among its established elites.⁷² This is perhaps because rural and small-town southwestern Pennsylvania's growth rate was relatively modest compared to the rapidly expanding Far West or Eastern urban centers, giving Washingtonians greater continuity, cohesiveness, and insulation than was the case in many other areas of the North and free West. Furthermore, market forces and new economic patterns imposed themselves perhaps more slowly in Washington than in rapidly developing boom towns and cities, like nearby Pittsburgh and Wheeling, or more distant places both in the East and West.

TABLE 2-1: SAMPLE OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION IN TOWN COUNCIL, 1815-79

Attorney.....13	Tanner.....3	Plasterer.....1
Physician.....1	Cabinet Maker.....2	Cooper.....1
Various Merchants.....9	Carpenter.....2	Moulder.....1
Gentleman.....4	Wagon/Carriage Maker.....2	Blacksmith.....1
Newspaper editor.....1	Stone Mason.....2	Machinist.....1
Clerk.....3	Miller.....2	
Wool dealer/agent.....2	Weaver.....1	
Tailor.....1	Shoemaker.....1	
Innkeeper.....1	Hatter.....1	
Teacher.....1		

Source: Boyd Crumrine, *History of Washington County*, 1882. Data based on 15 sample years: 1815, 1820, 1824, 1834, 1840, 1845, 1850, 1852, 1857, 1861, 1863, 1867, 1870, 1873, 1875, and 1879.

⁷²Wiebe, *Opening of American Society*, 132.

Chapter 4: The Market Evolution, 1815-1860

The fire alarm bells pierced the Saturday morning stillness in Washington Borough around 6:00 a.m. on November 8, 1851; the S.B. & C. Hayes Carriage Manufactory's main building, a large three-story wood frame building was ablaze. The Hayes building sat at the rear of the public square and adjacent to the county court house, the jail, sheriff's office, and firehouse, as well as several businesses, homes, and the Methodist Protestant church. The fire could potentially gut the town's center if it managed to ignite the neighboring structures. A strong wind was blowing from the southwest that morning, vastly increasing the danger of a major conflagration. As the flames progressively engulfed the Hayes building, several brave (or foolish) men entered and began to salvage some of the unfinished carriages, tools, and supplies, before the inferno drove them out and entirely consumed the structure and its remaining contents.¹

As the Hayes fire's intensity grew, an even more horrifying prospect arose—the stiff wind was blowing hot embers onto the roofs of structures up to several hundred yards from the Hayes building, threatening to ignite a major catastrophe. Only the good fortune of a heavy frost from the previous night that still clung to the town's rooftops gave citizens the time they needed to snuff out the dangerous embers. For some time, the courthouse, jail, and fire engine house were in imminent danger, and were only saved by a combination of heroic efforts from the volunteer fire company and citizens, as well a timely shift in the wind. The Methodist Protestant church and an adjacent house were not so fortunate as the fire claimed them as additional casualties before being brought under control.² When the fire was finally extinguished, it was

¹ *Washington Examiner*, November 15, 1851.

² *Ibid.* According to the *Examiner*, the fire was apparently accidental, and arson was ruled out.

clear that a major disaster had been only narrowly averted. *Washington Examiner* editor John Grayson estimated that perhaps half the town could have burned.³

Losses to the S.B. & C. Hayes Carriage Company, the borough's largest business with about 33 employees, amounted to around \$6000, potentially threatening its survival.⁴ Hoping to save Hayes Carriage, a public relief effort was organized to raise funds to help get them back into operation.⁵ As the *Washington Examiner* noted, "immediately after the fire, subscription papers were started in behalf of the Messrs. Hayes, and a liberal amount was subscribed in a few hours. The fire was a public calamity, and it is but right that the public should lend a helping hand in the restoration work. The feeling of regret for their heavy loss is deep and universal throughout this entire community."⁶

By coincidence, the Presbyterian congregation had relocated to a new brick church just two months earlier, departing their 45-year-old church in the southwestern part of town for their newly constructed larger church adjacent to Washington College. Two days after the fire, the Hayes brothers met with the church trustees and arranged the purchase of the vacated church; the conversion process into a manufactory began the next day, and soon the normal work routine resumed; the S.B. & C. Hayes Carriage Company had survived.⁷ The resurrection of the fire's other major victim, the Methodist Protestant church, also began immediately. The church trustees sold the gutted structure and lot to a local attorney a week after the fire, purchased an

³ *Washington Examiner*, Nov. 15, 1851; Boyd Crumrine, *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania, With Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1882), 555-556.

⁴ Washington Borough Tax Rolls of 1847, Citizens' Library Microfilm Collection, Washington, PA; Joseph F. McFarland, *20th Century History of Washington and Washington County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Richmond-Arnold Publishing, 1910), 468.

⁵ The church's and Hayes' rapid recovery from the fire suggests that they may have been at least partially insured by the Washington Mutual Fire Insurance Agency or another agency, but no documentary evidence exists. Would responsible businessmen and institutional trustees forgo insurance in an era where fire represented an ever-present danger and a locally-run insurer was readily available?

⁶ *Washington Examiner*, Nov. 15, 1851.

⁷ Alfred Creigh, *History of Washington County From Its First Settlement to the Present Time* (Harrisburg, PA: B. Singerly, Printer, 1871), 175, 353-354; Boyd Crumrine, *History of Washington County*, 555.

empty lot across the street from their old site, and began construction on a new brick edifice before November's end.⁸

The Hayes fire illustrates a critical fact about Washington and the Market Revolution at the nineteenth century's halfway mark. Despite the market revolution's growing influence on the local economy, society, and politics, it had not yet fundamentally transformed Washington Borough and the wider county. By the 1850s, and indeed, for at least a decade and a half after the Civil War, the community remained in many ways strongly rooted to its earlier social, economic, and political patterns, retaining the character of what historian Robert Wiebe referred to as the island-community, in which localism was the predominant mindset, organizing principle, and economic pattern.⁹ Although the Market Revolution defies precise definition, it can be described by a set of prevailing characteristics. As economic and social historian Christopher Clark notes, the market revolution was not a single discrete event or immediate transformation to a modern capitalist-based economy, but rather a set of interrelated long-term changes and adjustments "all connected with the replacement of locally oriented, regionally self-sufficient rural economies by a national market network." According to Clark, the fundamental changes were anchored in the growing significance of coordinated long-distance trade and commerce, expanding towns and cities that served as focal points for production and distribution, the increased mobility of capital, goods, and labor with increasing disregard for traditional considerations like the "moral economy" or community obligations, and finally, legal and governmental changes to favor and support the growing capitalist economy. Moreover, Clark argues, the market revolution reached beyond purely economic, administrative, and legal changes to impact social arrangements, ideologies, belief structures, and inspire popular political

⁸ Creigh, *History of Washington County*, 183.

⁹ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920*, (New York: Hill & Wang, 1967), 4.

activism.¹⁰ John Lauritz Larson essentially agrees with Clark, noting that although a rudimentary merchant-capitalism had existed even in the colonial period, the market revolution vastly accelerated, broadened, and deepened capitalistic forces across the entire American economy and society. Unlike earlier periods in which most people lived and worked in a relatively self-contained local or regional economy, largely dependent on barter and deeply imbued in a community-oriented moral economy, the market revolution introduced a system in which individual self-interest began to take paramount importance, the cash nexus replaced barter, and the moral economy and public interest waned in influence.¹¹ In Washington Borough at midcentury, and for at least another decade and a half, the market revolution's impact was incomplete and still heavily intermixed with lingering traditional elements in the town's economy, social arrangements, and politics.

Alan Kulikoff describes two competing interpretations among historians on the market revolution in rural areas, with a "market" approach versus a "social" viewpoint. Historians adhering to the former tend to emphasize capitalism's early influence and the growing need or aspiration among farmers, craftsmen, and small merchants to engage more fully in wider markets and their gamble on faster and greater economic gain, whereas the social approach points out the complex changes and disruptions in social relationships that resulted as the market revolution accelerated and a new capitalist system displaced household production and the moral economy. Paul E. Johnson, for example, takes the social route in studying the rise in temperance activism, tracing it to the altered employer-worker relationship that resulted from the market revolution. As employer and employed drifted into separate social worlds, and a new working class imbibed

¹⁰ 1. Christopher Clark, "The Consequences of the Market Revolution in the American North," in *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions 1800-1880*, ed. Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 25-27.

¹¹ John Lauritz Larson, *The Market Revolution in America: Liberty, Ambition, and the Eclipse of the Common Good* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3-8.

spirits without any supervision, shop owners and other elites began to crusade against alcohol in an effort to assert social control in the changed circumstances. Market-oriented historians, like Winifred Rothenberg, emphasize the acceleration of the capitalist impulse and the growing influence and opportunities that faced American farmers by the middle and late 1700s.¹² In Washington, as with so many other small towns, it is essential to understand the market revolution as a long process and a series of small adjustments, not an immediate spectacular break with old patterns. As Joyce Appleby notes, societies change gradually because “novelties must be incorporated into the culture forms, and this is the work of expression and discussion.” As the new entrepreneurial economy blossomed, people had to assess its benefits, costs, and expected impact before accepting it partially or fully, and the capitalist ethic had to work its way to acceptability and respectability in stages.¹³ Washington, Pennsylvania, was no exception to this long process. Market forces did present the county’s farmers, craftsmen, and merchants with new opportunities and patterns, although in a more evolutionary than revolutionary way, and as a result social relationships also transformed relatively slowly.

To be sure, Washington County’s farmers had developed significant economic ties to distant markets as far back as the 1790s with corn and whiskey exports, and by the early 1800s, wool quickly established itself as the chief agricultural commodity. Likewise, local merchants developed business relationships with the nearby cities of Pittsburgh to the north and Wheeling, Virginia, to the west, as well as the eastern coastal cities, primarily Philadelphia and Baltimore. Nevertheless, small producers, barter arrangements, local markets, and personal relationships

¹² Alan Kulikoff, “The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 46, No. 1 (January 1989), 122-23; Christopher Clark (ed), “The Transition to Capitalism in America: A Panel Discussion,” *The History Teacher*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (May 1994), 265-66.; Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Winifred B. Rothenberg, “The Emergence of a Capital Market in Rural Massachusetts, 1730-1838,” *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (December 1985), 781-808; Winifred B. Rothenberg, “The Market and Massachusetts Farmers, 1750-1855,” *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (September 1988), 537-566.

¹³ Joyce Appleby, *The Relentless Revolution: A History of Capitalism* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 88-89.

continued to play a major role in local economic patterns. Washington County at midcentury was still demographically dominated by rural farming communities and small villages and boroughs. Even Washington Borough, the county's political seat and largest town, still had only about 3600 people by 1860. Relatively slow population growth typified southwestern Pennsylvania after about 1820, with the exception of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. The frontier had passed beyond western Pennsylvania into Ohio even before the nineteenth century began, and Ohio's 1803 statehood symbolically pushed the frontier even further west. When people decided to move to the West, they looked more to the rapidly growing territories beyond Ohio, which would soon become the states of Indiana and Illinois, than they looked to western Pennsylvania. Indeed, Washington County slipped from being the most populous in southwestern Pennsylvania in 1800 to third in 1840, remaining behind Allegheny and Westmoreland counties into the post-Civil War period, and it was the only southwestern Pennsylvanian county to experience a decade with population decline, losing 3.5% of its population between 1830 and 1840 before rebounding again.¹⁴

With the frontier long since shifted further West and the best arable lands already occupied, the rate of immigration into southwestern Pennsylvania, with the exception of the greater Pittsburgh area, slowed significantly by the nineteenth century's second quarter, meaning that most increases were attributable to the existing population's natural growth. Like its surrounding county, Washington Borough experienced very little population pressure, a marked contrast to the boom towns upon which scholars tend to focus, like Donald H. Doyle's study of Jacksonville, Illinois, or Paul E. Johnson's examination of Rochester, New York, whose

¹⁴ Department of the Interior, *Statistics on the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1883), 76.

population surged from 700 in 1817 to over 7000 a decade later.¹⁵ The town of Washington had about a thousand inhabitants in 1800 and did not double until 1840, when the census recorded 2062 people in the borough, a growth rate quite unlike a true boom town. The census numbers do not include the borough's immediate suburban residents, who were only detached from the community by an arbitrary boundary, but it is sufficient to strongly indicate the town's relatively slow population growth. The borough's population increase did accelerate in the 1840-1860 antebellum period, rising from 2062 to 3587, but some of that increase is attributable to the borough's two boundary expansions in the 1850s.¹⁶

The modest population growth rates combined with the absence of any serious manufacturing expansion to help preserve the town's socio-economic patterns during the nineteenth century's first half and even into the post-Civil War period. Washington Borough in 1810 was, like the larger county, overwhelmingly populated by native Scots-Irish Pennsylvanians and remained so for more than another half century, and their Presbyterianism was the dominant religious affiliation during this period, although other Protestant congregations flourished also, including Methodists, Baptists, and Episcopalians, as well as Presbyterian splinter congregations. The small immigrant population, mostly Germans, English, Scots, and a few Irish, were easily assimilated and acculturated. Indeed, immigrants were among the town's early leadership class, including the Ulster-born Acheson brothers, and physicians John Wishart from Scotland, and John J. LeMoyne, a French Huguenot refugee from the Revolution.¹⁷ Indeed, the bulk of the native Pennsylvanians in Washington were descendents of the Scots-Irish who

¹⁵ Don Harrison Doyle, *Social Order in a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-1870* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978, Illini Books edition, 1983), 261; Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (1978; repr., New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 72.

¹⁶ *Washington Reporter*, October 3, 1910. This date's edition commemorated the centennial of Washington's incorporation as a borough, and it included extensive historical coverage.

¹⁷ J.H. Beers, *Commemorative Biographical Record of Washington County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1893), 7; Walter K. MacAdam, *Beyond the Bozeman Trail: The Story of Captain Alexander Wishart* (West Lebanon, NH: Westways Press, 1996), 3-4.

had settled in eastern Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century. Most immigrants, with the exception of some German and Irish Catholics, were affiliated with various Protestant denominations. The Catholic population remained marginal throughout the period and anti-Catholicism never grew beyond a few periodic expressions of fear or outrage at the institution. Lacking significant immigrant or Catholic populations in the county or Borough, ethno-cultural conflicts were minimal in its local political arena and marginal in most people's party affiliation choices. Even in 1860, foreign-born immigrants only amounted to 5% of the county's total population.¹⁸

The relatively slow-growing and homogenous population, combined with small-scale producers' persistent predominance in the local economy, helped keep the market revolution's most immediate social and economic impacts limited in Washington until well after the Civil War. The average township or borough in Washington County had no significant industrial or manufacturing base, no population surge, and no burgeoning working class or immigrant community to seriously pressure or alter the prevailing social culture. As Washington's institutions, policies, and attitudes developed in congruence with the market revolution's expansion, it did so without the rapidity, intensity, and disruptions so common in the western boom towns.

The slow population growth, absence of industrial expansion, and social demographic continuity between 1800 and the 1870s should not be confused with stagnation, however. Over the nineteenth century's first three quarters, Washington Borough did experience population growth comparable with other small southwestern Pennsylvania towns, and it did develop and expand various economic, social, and political institutions that reflected the market revolution's

¹⁸ Department of the Interior, *Ninth Census of the United States, Statistics of Population* (Government Printing Office: Washington DC, 1872), 320.

influences, but in a relatively low-pressure environment compared to the boom towns. Except for the Pittsburgh metropolitan area, southwestern Pennsylvania towns in before the Civil War were all relatively small with slow population growth rates, and at mid-century, Washington Borough was still the largest among the country towns spread across western Pennsylvania.¹⁹

The National Road's local opening through Washington Borough and the across the county in 1819 was the most significant transportation-related market revolution development between 1800 and 1850, but it represented an acceleration in transportation improvements, not a beginning. By the 1810s, Washington saw the arrival of its first banks, developmental corporations for internal improvements, and commercial agriculture's expansion into wool exports. Distant markets, transportation improvements, and modern financial institutions were key aspects to Washington's early market revolution experiences. Over the next half century, the market revolution's impact grew slowly but moved inexorably forward as Washington Borough and the county slowly evolved out of localism and provincialism, and market influences began moving beyond purely economic patterns to include politics and, at least to an extent, local society.

The fact that many citizens would freely donate money to assist the Hayes brothers in their recovery effort after their 1850 fire reveals a lingering sense of community responsibility. At mid-century, despite some important inroads, the market revolution had not yet eroded the provincial town's sense of community. Townspeople believed that Hayes Carriage was a vital part of their local economy; the owners were not the only ones who had been harmed by the fire. As the *Examiner* had noted, it was a public disaster, and a public response was appropriate. Although it was a growing town, Washington still had only about 2000 people in 1850, small

¹⁹ Ibid, 243-246, 249, 256.

enough to maintain a relatively close-knit social and economic fabric.²⁰ If Hayes Carriage were to falter, more than thirty people would lose their jobs and a major local taxpayer would be lost. What is more, Hayes' carriages were sold all over the country, and the company's demise would be a highly visible symbolic diminishment of the community, which did not sit well with Washingtonians who considered their town a model of progress.²¹ Indeed, the *Examiner* specifically called the fire a "public tragedy," and the citizenry apparently agreed, as shown by their financial support for the stricken firm. It is also notable that people "subscribed" to a relief fund, reflecting the persisting reality that cash was not always a ready resource, and major outlays required advance planning; indeed, there was an apparently strong barter element in local exchange patterns into the 1830s before fading out in favor of the cash and credit nexus. The fact that citizens responded so quickly and saw the Hayes' misfortune as their own setback also demonstrates the lingering sense of what early sociologist Ferdinand Toennies called *Gemeinschaft*, in which personal relationships, trust, continuity, and the perceived public good was the primary foundation for community cohesiveness. Although the market revolution enhanced the growth of *Gesellschaft* conditions, in which individualism, self-interest, and impersonal forces are the dominant factor in social relations, they had not yet fully displaced traditional social ethics in Washington.²² Even at mid-century, Washington Borough was still small and stable enough to continue to exert these traditional social bonds and function in similar patterns as it had a generation earlier. Indeed, Robert H. Wiebe and Hal S. Barron both observe that many rural areas and small country towns were not yet fully integrated into the modern

²⁰ Department of the Interior, *Ninth U.S. Population Manuscript Census for Washington Borough*, 1850. Citizens' Library Microfilm Collection, Washington, PA.

²¹ *Washington Reporter*, Dec. 3, 1856.

²² James A. Christenson, "Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft: Testing the Spatial and Communal Hypotheses," *Social Forces*, Vol. 63, No. 1, (September 1984), 160-162. These concepts should not be regarded as mutually exclusive antitheses, but in reality, elements from both coexist in any given community, although one may be a predominant form.

bureaucratic world by the early 20th century, with localism still significant, so it is not hard to imagine the lingering traditionalism and provincialism in Washington between the 1810s and 1860s, when the market revolution was still in its first phases.²³

A core of community leaders stood at the forefront of growth and development in the town, taking an active role in promoting what they saw as the town's best interests, and their influence was present in virtually all the major aspects of local public life, including politics, business, education, culture, and spiritual/moral concerns. Perhaps foremost among their concerns was to ensure Washington's continued economic vitality and growth, for this was the foundation on which all other things rested, but social order and qualitative development were also keys to their community vision. When considering Washington's institutional and attitudinal character from the early 1800s to the Civil War, it is important to remember that it was a strongly Protestant, particularly Presbyterian, community where strict order and public morality was already an ingrained social characteristic even before the market revolution exerted a major influence. In Washington, social changes that are often attributed to market revolution forces, including moral societies, temperance, poor relief associations, and even education reform, were also outgrowths from the prevailing local religious heritage. Predominantly populated by Calvin's and Knox's theological descendents, and backed up by a sizable temperance-prone Methodist contingent, the townspeople and their rural neighbors were already well-schooled in the kinds of social control, moral enforcement, and evangelism that typically appeared in rapidly growing and industrializing boom towns and large cities. Market revolution pressures did not create these attitudes and activities in Washington, but the market's growing influence on the region, county, and town certainly reinforced them.

²³ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 301; Hal S. Barron, *Mixed Harvest: The Second Great Transformation in the Rural North, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 19-20.

The market revolution also impacted local politics, just as it did at the state and national level. Economic issues had played an important political role since the region's frontier period, as evidenced by the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion, a showdown between commodity exporting farmers and the central government's taxation and regulation powers. The incident's most durable legacy in southwestern Pennsylvania was the Federalist Party's eclipse and a strong, consistent Democratic-Republic majority. Indeed, Washington County was so heavily lop-sided against the Federalists that Treasury Secretary Albert Gallatin urged President Jefferson in 1808 to route the planned National Road should be routed through it if only for the political purpose of maintaining the voters' loyalties.²⁴ By the 1820s, the county and Borough began a period of political and economic transformation. The new mass politics produced wide Jackson Democrat majorities in the 1820s, but it would be a mistake to assume that Washington's Democratic-Republicans in the early 1800s were all so-called Old Republicans who mistrusted the Constitutional structure and wanted to completely dismantle the Hamiltonian economic approach. While these opinions circulated widely in Washington as they did elsewhere, a more commercially-minded and development-oriented faction coexisted within the same political tent, and the tensions between them as market forces grew in scope became an important feature in local politics during from the century's beginning until the Civil War.²⁵ Wool's rapidly growing commercial importance by the late 1820s helped sustain viable a National Republican opposition faction, and by the 1830s, the two-party system fully revived in Washington, with the town and county divided between its entrenched Jacksonian Democrat loyalties and the new Whig Party, whose central local issues were tariff protections, banking, and economic development.

²⁴ Philip Jordan, *The National Road* (New York: Bubbs-Merrill Company, 1948), 79.

²⁵ 6. Richard E. Ellis, "The Market Revolution and the Transformation of American Politics, 1801-1837," in *The Market Revolution in America*, eds. Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, 150-151.

The market revolution in Washington Borough and its surrounding county between the 1810s and the Civil War was an evolutionary, nebulous, and transitory process, not a sharp, rapid, finite revolution. In agriculture, for example, despite their increasingly market-oriented production, the family farm remained intact, and this is true in Washington County, where commercial wool production was rooted in the family farm.²⁶ The same can be said for Washington Borough's commercial and manufacturing economy; despite growing market patterns, including the cash nexus, banking, insurance, and regular connections to distant marketplaces, small business continued to monopolize economic activity and local markets continued to carry vital importance. Even at midcentury and persisting into the 1870s, there were no truly large or industrial business concerns in Washington Borough and across the county, with the exception of the Monongahela River area on its eastern border, where coal mining was an important and growing industry by the 1850s. Just as family farms dominated local agriculture, small craftsmen, mechanics, merchants, and other businesses held sway in the small villages and towns. Indeed, the S.B. & C. Hayes Carriage Company, with 33 employees, was Washington Borough's largest employer in 1850, but could hardly be considered a giant. As the market revolution accelerated nationally between the 1810s and the Civil War, small towns like Washington, Pennsylvania, were spared most of the immediate disruptions it produced, but it was not immune from its growing currents and eddies. Well before the Civil War, Washington was part of the economic growth and partial transformation which characterized the region. Washington Borough had a fairly well-developed craft and commercial economy with strong ties to its neighbors, both large and small. The half century between Washington's incorporation as a borough in 1810 and the Civil War's beginning may not represent a full scale market revolution,

²⁶ 1. Christopher Clark, "Consequences in the North," *The Market Revolution in America*, eds. Stokes and Conway, 26-28.

but it was undeniably a market evolution that set the stage for rapid economic and social change after the 1870s.

Transportation Improvements: Roads, 1817-1849

Transportation improvements were a critical to the market revolution's advance in the early nineteenth century, and Washington was no exception. Indeed, in the 1780s and 1790s, prohibitive transportation costs forced local corn growers to distill their surplus crop into whiskey for easier transport to eastern markets. The Federal excise tax on whiskey threatened to eat away at the narrow profit on this product, sparking the famed, but short-lived, Whiskey Rebellion in which local farmers and Federal tax policy came into direct conflict. The whiskey excise tax was intended to fund internal improvements, which would benefit the farmers in the long run, but its short-term costs, not to mention its perceived illegality, incited a strong local opposition. By the nineteenth century's beginning, overland transportation difficulties continued to plague the entire region, and as a Federal road was planned to connect the Northwest to the eastern seaboard, Washington County was a strong candidate for inclusion on its route, partly because of its proximity to the Ohio River and partly because Washington County's overwhelming Democratic-Republican majority was so valuable a political asset against Pennsylvania's Federalists that Jefferson was unwilling to alienate by denying them a place on the National Road's route.²⁷

As the National Road's planning and construction went forward, Washington engaged in its own local road improvements, particularly through two turnpike corporations. As economic historian John Majewski notes, developmental corporations in the early nineteenth century, and they drew on established community relationships for support. Early developmental corporations, such as turnpikes, toll bridges, and navigation firms, were financed mostly by local

²⁷ Jordan, *The National Road*, 79-80.

citizens with assistance from state or local governments. Prominent local men typically led these organizations, using their credibility and reputations to help reassure the public of their honorable, community-spirited objectives. According to Majewski, these corporations “mediated economic self-interest with community norms. They did not require an ethos of ‘possessive individualism’ in which entrepreneurs and businessmen violated community standards to pursue economic gains. Such behavior, in fact, was antithetical to developmental corporations....”²⁸

The Washington & Pittsburgh Turnpike and the Washington & Williamsport Turnpike were important local developmental corporations designed primarily to facilitate local trade and enhance land values. These two turnpikes are classic examples of what economic historian John Majewski calls developmental corporations, in which ownership is overwhelmingly local and the primary expected advantage is enhanced land values and market opportunities rather than direct financial returns.²⁹ Chartered in 1816, the Washington and Williamsport Turnpike Company (WWTC) struggled with financial difficulties from the beginning, and although construction began soon after the chartering, it was not completed until the 1830s. The pike was poorly maintained and did not become the vital local transportation artery that was originally envisioned. The Washington & Pittsburgh Turnpike Company (WPTC), chartered in 1817, was the county and town’s second major internal improvement effort, and it faced similar financial obstacles and also took years longer than anticipated to complete. By 1822, the WPTC had garnered \$50,000 in private subscriptions and another \$12,000 from the state government, but subscriptions and ready cash are two different things. Not only was it difficult to find subscribers, but collecting the installments was in many cases another major battle for the

²⁸ John Majewski, *A House Dividing: Economic Development in Pennsylvania and Virginia Before the Civil War* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 45, 57.

²⁹ John Majewski, “Who Financed the Transportation Revolution? Regional Divergence and Internal Improvements in Antebellum Pennsylvania and Virginia,” *Journal of Economic History*, Vol.56, No. 4 (December 1996), 767-769.

company, as public notices for subscription payments in the local newspapers were frequently ignored. One frequent problem in financing developmental corporations was the tendency of potential investors to make their subscriptions conditional on their preferred route; if the road did not pass their immediate vicinity, they refused to invest. An October 8, 1818 letter by WPTC president John Hoge to the Secretary of the Commonwealth Thomas Sargent directly addressed this problem and its impact on the company's ability to raise funds. Hoge explained that a group of subscribers, "finding themselves disappointed in not having the turnpike road located exactly to suit their views, secreted one of the books containing subscriptions for stock. The managers have hitherto been unable to recover the purloined book, but they have taken measures which they believe will be affective for discovering it...." Hoge went on to estimate that the company had enough funds to complete about two-thirds of the road, and expressed his hopes that the legislature would provide enough funding to complete the project, reminding Sargent that this project would connect the State Road that between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh with the National Road, thereby making it an improvement with statewide implications.³⁰ Since no one was ever apparently connected to the missing subscription book, the motives surrounding the theft by aggrieved would-be investors invites some speculation. Did they fear somehow the courts would enforce their subscriptions under threat of penalty, thereby making the theft necessary? Did their belief in a moral economy provide self-justification for extralegal, or illegal, efforts? Were they emboldened by similar actions against Federal tax agents during the Whiskey Rebellion twenty-five years earlier, and did this precedent provide further self-justification? Given the local history and the suspicions and fears of even modest corporate entities among so many small

³⁰ John Hoge to Thomas Sargent, October 8, 1818. Washington & Pittsburgh Turnpike Road Papers, RG-26, 1-2292, Box 14, Pennsylvania State Archives (hereafter PSA), Harrisburg, PA.

farmers and craftsmen, and given the growing pro-business statutes and court rulings that had begun to characterize American law, such speculations seem valid, or at least plausible.³¹

The initial subscription lists for both the Washington & Williamsport (WWTC) and the Washington & Pittsburgh (WPTC) turnpike companies also reveal a consistency with other locally-oriented developmental corporations in the early nineteenth century North and free-state West. When granting charters, the Pennsylvania legislature routinely required corporations to obtain a prescribed number of initial subscriptions and payments before their charter could be formally activated; when they attained the threshold, the investors and their shares were listed on the actual state-issued charter document. Both the WWTC and WPTC original subscribers demonstrate the prevailing small private investment pattern in developmental corporations in the early nineteenth century. The WWTC had 85 individual investors who purchased 557 shares, and a consortium of 24 men who collectively purchased 248 shares, and for whom it is impossible to break down the individual investment. But of the 85 individual investors, 63 owned five or fewer shares, while only four men purchased 16 or more shares, underscoring again that developmental road corporations tended to rely most heavily on small scale investors, and even the few larger investors held modest amounts of shares.³²

Ten years after its chartering, the struggling WPTC had finished only 17 of its 25-mile route, but a charter extension and further state investment helped it finish construction by 1835. As difficult as the turnpike's completion had been, maintenance posed another enduring problem, and the road's toll income was never sufficient to allow proper upkeep, resulting in frequent complaints and even a lawsuit against the company. By 1856, the WPTC was moribund, virtually abandoning all maintenance and even lacking a proper board of directors, as noted in

³¹ John Majewski, *A House Dividing*, 86-88.

³² List of Subscribers to the Washington and Williamsport Turnpike Road Company, April 7, 1817, Washington & Williamsport Turnpike Company Papers, RG-26, 1-2292, Box 14, PSA.

the state law authorizing the company to remand the road's portions to various townships and the boroughs near its final terminus at the Ohio River near Pittsburgh.³³

The two turnpike road companies are excellent examples of economic developmental corporations. These were local projects, supported mostly by local businessmen and farmers who desired better transportation access more than direct financial profit from their investment, and indeed, neither the WWTC nor the WPTC ever paid a stock dividend. Washington and Allegheny County both had trusted representatives leading the WPTC project, and no outsiders except the state legislature were involved. Indeed, John Hoge, one Washington Borough's co-founders, surveyed the route in 1816, and John Hoge Ewing, his closest friend's son, supervised the road's final construction in the early 1830s.³⁴ The WPTC never became a profitable venture and limped along for several years before it was seized by creditors in 1839 and run by trustees. Despite the difficulties in constructing and maintaining these turnpikes, they demonstrate the market revolution's impetus for improved transportation, whether local or long distance. As important as these turnpikes were for local commerce, the National Road was a far more important factor in local economic development.

There were also other purely intra-county road projects, most of which were not completed, but they do reflect the growing desire for improved reliable transportation links. For example, the road between Washington Borough and West Middletown, seven miles to its northwest, was in serious disrepair, prompting citizens along its route to propose a company to make it a more passable thoroughfare. Although not chartered by the state as a corporation, its

³³ Crumrine, *History of Washington County*, 383-84; Earle J. Forrest, *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania*, 3 vols. (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1926) I, 764-66; *Laws of the General Assembly of the State of Pennsylvania, Passed at the Session of 1856* (Harrisburg, PA: A. Boyd Hamilton, State Printer, 1856), 54-55.

³⁴ Crumrine, 383-84. William Porter Ewing was a close friend and associate of John Hoge, and named one of his sons in Hoge's honor. John Hoge Ewing boarded with his namesake during his years at Washington College, and later worked with his father constructing several National Road sections in Washington County.

boosters proposed opening subscription books allowing people to pledge whatever they could. The market revolution's incomplete transformation to a cash and credit nexus is revealed in the meeting's resolution that subscribers could pay up to three-fourths of their subscriptions in kind with farm produce, with only one quarter required to be in monetary form. Moreover, subscription payments would only come due as actual progress on the road was accomplished. As with the turnpike roads and other local developmental corporations and associations, notable men from both towns led the effort, including Washington's prominent attorney and town councilman Thomas M.T. McKennan and physician Dr. John Wishart. There is no evidence that this road-building organization ever came to fruition, but indicates again that transportation improvements large and small were a significant local response to the market revolution's growing influence in southwestern Pennsylvania by the 1810s and 1820s.³⁵

The National Road opened through Washington County and on to Wheeling, Virginia, and the Ohio River in 1819, providing Washington Borough with a vital east-west thoroughfare making overland travel between Baltimore and the Ohio River cheaper and faster than ever before. Not only did the Road afford Washingtonians and other Westerners their first practical overland link to distant markets for both imports and exports, but it brought a steady flow of migrants through the county's heart and literally down Main Street in Washington Borough.³⁶ The National Road did not bring a population surge to Washington Borough, but it put the town on one of the region's most important transportation routes, and gave it a significant economic boost. Wagons filled with produce, goods, and people choked the National Road throughout the 1820s and 1830s, providing local merchants, craftsmen, innkeepers and hoteliers a steady customer base beyond what locals could provide. Congressman Thomas M.T. McKennan

³⁵ *Washington Examiner*, August 19, 1822.

³⁶ Jordan, *The National Road*, 237.

remarked in the early 1830s that the National Road halved the transportation costs and time from Baltimore to Wheeling, a significant savings even factoring in a margin of error in McKennan's estimate.³⁷ In its heyday, it was commonplace for coaches and wagons to travel through town in convoys of up to two dozen, and as were livestock herds, including hogs, cattle, mules, and sheep, on their way to market. Hotels, taverns, wagon repair shops, and sundry merchants dotted the National Road all along its route, but the greatest concentrations were found in the boroughs, particularly Washington. Several stage coach lines operated out of Washington Borough, typically headquartering in a local hotel or tavern. Some Washington-based coach lines expanded to become truly regional carriers, like the National Road Stage Company, which had partners, agents, and coaches operating all the way from Baltimore to Wheeling by the 1830s.³⁸ The National Road's importance was strong enough that contemporary Washingtonians were consciously aware that their primary eastern trading center was shifting rapidly from Philadelphia to Baltimore. The Road did not attract cargo alone, however, and as amateur National Road historian Thomas B. Searight noted in his 1894 book, whiskey consumption was a normal fact of life on the National Road, and it is likely that widespread unsupervised liquor consumption among travelers and in taverns rankled the Presbyterian and Methodist faithful, who together formed a clear religious majority. It seems that traveling migrants, not a property-less and unconstrained working class, account for the local temperance movement that began at the close of the 1820s. It is also possible that news coverage on supposed working class vices and conflicts in other cities, including the neighboring cities of Pittsburgh and Wheeling,

³⁷ Robert H. Campbell, et al, *Official Program: Washington Sesquicentennial, Washington, Pennsylvania: 1810-1960, Coen Oil Company Presents 150 Years of Transportation*, 2, Washington, PA: Observer Publishing Co., 1960), <http://digital.library.pitt.edu/cgi-bin/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=pitttext;cc=pitttext;q1=hempfield%20railroad;idno=31735051652216;node=31735051652216%3A1.6;frm=frameset;rgn=full%20text;didno=31735051652216;view=image;seq=28;page=root;size=s>; *Washington Reporter*, October 3, 1910.

³⁸ Forrest, *History of Washington County*, I, 744-45.

Virginia, also roused Washingtonians to support temperance as a preventative measure to protect their own community before liquor could have a decisive negative impact.³⁹

It should be noted that the National Road did produce ambivalence among people who generally supported internal improvements and economic development, but who opposed the American System's purposeful exercise of Federal power to promote it. For instance, during a July 4 celebration and banquet in Washington Borough in 1822, local notables capped an evening of patriotic speeches with a series of toasts that reveal both optimism and anxiety about the economic changes then beginning to grip the nation, state, county, and town. One toast lauded agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing, urging their equal advancement and encouragement, while the very next toast denounced the banking system as "evil in its origins, corrupt in its progress, and destructive in its results," with no differentiation between small local banks and large distant ones. Another toast ballyhooed internal improvements and challenged Pennsylvanians to emulate New York's active pursuit of better transportation access, while a subsequent toast made to the National Road chided it as the "abandoned child of an unnatural parent."⁴⁰ The 1822 Independence Day toasts offer a glimpse at both the desire for economic advancement and a fear of some of the market revolution's centralizing tendencies, such as banking and Federal-sponsored improvements. It appears from the rhetoric that state and local economic development efforts were more legitimate than centrally planned Federal projects, and small-scale institutions which lacked the capacity to secure undue or manipulative influences, were preferable to larger ones.

³⁹ Thomas B. Searight, *The Old Pike: A History of the National Road, With Incidents, Anecdotes, and Accidents Thereon* (Uniontown, PA: self-published, 1894), 16-17.

⁴⁰ *Washington Examiner*, July 15, 1822.

Commercial Farming: From Local Impact to Distant Markets

The Road's economic importance was not limited to servicing passersby, importing Eastern goods, and faster mail delivery; it also facilitated the county's commodity exports, particularly corn, whiskey, barley, and wool. Before 1810, corn and barley were the county's biggest agricultural products, with barley so prevalent that it served as a medium of exchange in local circles. Even into the early 1800s, corn was still used as the basis for whiskey production, and it remained one of the county's most important exports at this time. The expanding agriculture sector spurred one of the county's earliest developmental corporations, organized in 1810 as the Monongahela Manufacturing and Milling Company. Located in the county's southeastern section on Ten Mile Creek, a tributary to the Monongahela River, the company specialized in processing wool, flax, and hemp, utilizing the creek's water power to run its machinery, and apparently did limited iron work as well. The company authorized 200 stock shares and allegedly attracted investors from across the county, including Washington Borough merchants Alexander Reed and James C. Acheson. It is perhaps reflective of the prevailing egalitarian and republican impulses in the local culture that investors were limited to ten shares.⁴¹

Fulling and grist mills quickly spread across the county in the early nineteenth century, and Washington Borough was no exception. In 1814, the state legislature chartered the Washington Steam-Mill and Manufacturing Company, with a capital stock of \$50,000. This business entity, led by town entrepreneurs and civic leaders including attorney (and later judge) Thomas H. Baird, merchant Alexander Reed, and attorney Obadiah Jennings, represents another form of developmental corporation to complement transportation improvements. Like its turnpike counterparts, it was designed primarily to provide a needed public service, and indeed, an 1893 biographical sketch of Thomas Baird insists that he never made a financial profit from

⁴¹ Beers, 152-153; *Washington Reporter*, October 3, 1910.

during all his years associated with the steam mill. The mill did not succeed as a corporation, and within two years the Thomas H. Baird acquired sole possession of the mill, in turn leasing it to a succession of operators who continued to card wool and mill grains for surrounding area farmers until it was destroyed by fire in May 1831. In a strictly private venture from the start, Washington Borough merchant David Acheson built his own woolen factory in 1827, leasing its operations until selling it outright in 1836.⁴² It is clear that agricultural expansion in the surrounding countryside could stimulate business growth in Washington Borough, and as in so many towns and cities across the country, it was a mutually reinforcing relationship between town and countryside.

By the 1810s, wool production began to expand across the county, and some Washington Borough entrepreneurs were among the pioneers transforming it into the county's leading export. The Borough's ambitious merchant and sometimes-farmer Alexander Reed is often credited as the most important individual in revolutionizing the local wool business as the pioneer in importing Spanish Merino sheep, which produced both high quality wool and a large yield, and introducing the finest English horse and cattle breeds, and he was allegedly the first to export wool to Eastern markets.⁴³ Although it may be an exaggeration to credit Reed solely for the surge in wool production by the 1820s and 1830s, it is clear that some borough businessmen and entrepreneurs combined farming with their other endeavors, hoping to foster not only their own interests, but the larger county's agricultural prowess. Men like Alexander Reed, Dr. Francis LeMoyne, and John Hoge Ewing were all involved in sheep husbandry and the wool business in addition to their other varied professional, business or commercial pursuits.⁴⁴

⁴² Crumrine, 554.

⁴³ Crumrine, 481; Colin M. Reed, "History of Fine Wool Growing in Washington County," transcript of speech made to the Washington County Historical Society, January 19, 1880. Reed Collection, Box A-88, WCHSA.

⁴⁴ Colin M. Reed, "History of Fine Wool Growing in Washington County," Beers, 8; Crumrine, 554.

These men and their associates, along with area farmers, maintained various agricultural promotion societies during the Jacksonian and antebellum periods, with the state-chartered Washington County Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and Domestic Manufactures the most significant. Formed in 1822, the Society garnered \$193 in subscriptions from its charter members that year, disbursing it as prize monies in various competitive food and fiber categories, from livestock to linens, at the inaugural county fair. This voluntary organization was soon known simply as the Washington County Agricultural Society, and it continued to promote scientific farming and husbandry, and sponsor annual county fairs throughout the nineteenth century. Borough men were prominent in the Agricultural Society's leadership just as they were in other local or countywide endeavors, ensuring that the organization actively kept abreast of the latest agricultural advances and innovations. Borough physician Francis LeMoyne, for example, joined the organization in 1825 and began entering his own sheep in competition. He was soon elected secretary, succeeding John Hoge Ewing and serving in that capacity for four years. LeMoyne remained an active member and officer in various positions until his death in 1876, always concerned with the local wool business. Likewise, Ewing remained a lifetime member and leader, even serving as its president in the 1850s. Indeed, even in the 1850s the Agricultural Society continued to draw support from businessmen and others whose primary personal work activity was not farming and livestock. Men like merchant and Franklin Bank president Colin M. Reed, and his brother, Dr. Robert Reed, whose father had been a founding member, attorney Samuel McFarland, and Sheldon B. Hayes, co-owner of the S.B.&C. Hayes Carriage Company were all active members in the society, either because of their own personal side investments in wool and other agricultural endeavors, or their understanding that thriving agricultural in the county would be an economic boom to all its residents, including non-

farmers.⁴⁵ These men often held land in the surrounding townships or further afield where they or hired hands raised livestock and crops. For instance, John Hoge Ewing owned land not only in Washington County, but in Ohio and Monongalia counties in Virginia, and as far away as Wright County, Iowa, where he depended on a local manager to maintain his flock.⁴⁶

Western Pennsylvania's agricultural sector began a significant expansion after the War of 1812 as demand in distant markets grew rapidly, including New Orleans and the Eastern cities.⁴⁷ Statistics demonstrate Washington County's agricultural prowess by 1840, leading its neighboring southwestern Pennsylvania counties (Beaver, Allegheny, Westmoreland, Fayette, and Greene) in a range of crops and livestock herds, including wheat, corn, barley, cattle, horses, sheep and pounds of wool.

Table 4-1: Selected Agricultural Statistics for Washington and Its Neighboring Counties, 1840⁴⁸

County	Total Sheep	Lbs. of Wool	Cattle	Horses	Corn (bu)	Wheat (bu)	Barly (bu)
Washington	222.6	483.0	35.3	15.7	653.0	666.0	12.0
Allegheny	56.5	101.0	21.5	10.7	290.0	461.0	5.9
Beaver	74.2	199.0	21.0	8.4	234.0	327.0	6.4
Fayette	54.0	98.0	30.2	10.1	551.0	334.0	0.52
Greene	37.1	70.0	10.4	7.7	437.0	252.0	0.0
Westmoreland	45.6	63.0	30.0	12.6	423.0	467.0	0.23

⁴⁵ Crumrine, 473,554; Beers, 8; Mary McCullough, *Fearless Defender of the Right*, 85-88.; *Washington Reporter*, February 25, 1857.

⁴⁶ Crumrine, 557; William Hull to John H. Ewing, August 18, 1843, describing the drive of 602 sheep from Washington County to Ewing's land in Iowa, Ewing Collection, Box A-4, WCHSA; Treasurer's Office, Wright County Iowa, Tax Receipt for John H. Ewing's Land in Wright County, April 24, 1863, Ewing Collection, Box A-4, WCHSA.

⁴⁷ Paul W. Gates, *The Farmer's Age: Agriculture 1815-1860, Vol. III of the Economic History of the United States* (New York: Hold, Rinehart, & Winston, 1960), 45.

⁴⁸ Isaac Rupp and Daniel W. Kaufman, *Early History of Western Pennsylvania and of Western Expeditions and Campaigns, 1754-1833* (Pittsburgh, PA: Daniel W. Kaufman, 1846), 255-256, 268-269, 282-283, 286-288, 335-337, 347-348. Detailed economic data from the 1840 census was provided for each county in Western Pennsylvania. All numbers rounded to the nearest 100 and expressed in 1000s.

Indeed, Washington County's sheep population was nearly as many as all the other counties combined, and alone accounted for 45.4% of the sheep in the six-county area, and contributing 47.6% of its total wool output. At the same time, Washington County had fewer woolen manufactories than any of the five surrounding counties, possibly suggesting that Washington's wool producers were highly focused on raw exports. Washington County's large sheep herds were still mostly on traditional family farms, not large-scale purely commercial ventures, with the 1850 Agricultural Census for Washington County showings the average farm with 95 improved acres and 101 sheep.⁴⁹ In wheat production, Washington's 666,000 bushels outstripped Westmoreland County, the next closest competitor by 199,000 bushels, and similarly it produced nearly twice the barley as the second largest producer, Beaver County. Allegheny County, home to the region's metropolis, Pittsburgh, unsurprisingly held a commanding lead in total taxable property, including real estate, which alone was valued at 13,314,000, far ahead of second-place Washington County, with a real estate value of \$6,401,000. Excluding Allegheny County, however, Washington's real estate value was significantly higher than the five other agriculture-based counties with which it shared a common border, worth more than \$1.5 million more than Westmoreland County, the next highest neighbor.⁵⁰ These figures demonstrate Washington County's advanced agricultural sector by the beginning of the antebellum period, but at the same time, except for Allegheny County, manufacturing was still a small part of overall economic activity.

⁴⁹ Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, "Washington County Agricultural Census Data -1850," 1-2, http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/gateway/PTARGS_0_2_20619_2608_307174_43/http%3B/pubcontent.state.pa.us/publishedcontent/publish/cop_environment/phmc/communities/extranet/history/aghistproj/agcensusinfo/tabcensusdata/1850_census_data___washington_county.pdf.

⁵⁰ Rupp and Kaufman, *Early History of Western Pennsylvania*, 255-256, 268-269, 282-283, 286-288, 335-337, 347-348.

Table 4-2: Real Estate Value and Distribution of Male Workforce for Washington and Surrounding Counties, 1840⁵¹

County	Taxable Real Estate Value (in millions)	% of male workforce: Agriculture	% of male workforce: Manufacturing	% of male workforce in mining	% of male workforce: commerce	% of male workforce: Professions
Washington	6.40	75.1	19.1	1.4	2.0	2.0
Allegheny	13.41	38.6	43.4	4.4	6.7	2.6
Beaver	3.69	73.8	21.6	0.003	1.7	1.6
Fayette	3.79	63.7	28.9	1.2	2.8	1.8
Greene	2.01	80.2	17.2	0.001	1.4	1.0
Westmoreland	4.86	74.5	18.6	0.007	2.7	2.2

When examining the percentage of the labor force working in agriculture, mining, manufacturing, river and canal transportation, commerce, and the professions, Washington County fits well within the regional norm, with only Allegheny County diverging with a far greater percentage of its workforce engaged in manufacturing and trades, mining, commerce, and river and canal operations, and only in Allegheny did farmers represent a minority of the total workforce. The remaining five counties all had a significant majority engaged in agriculture, ranging between 60-80%, with Washington, Westmoreland, and Beaver counties all at about three-fourths the total male workforce.⁵²

Although agricultural success is certainly not entirely derived from farmers' societies, the Washington County Agricultural Society was a long-term organization devoted to its advancement, and promoting scientific farming techniques was an important factor in agriculture's rapid expansion between the 1820s and the Civil War.⁵³ There were also other, and earlier, voluntary organizations to promote the local economy, a reflection of their determination

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Paul W. Gates, *The Farmer's Age: Agriculture 1815-1860, Vol. III, The Economic History of the United States* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), 418.

to advance their future prospect, security, and property ownership.⁵⁴ In 1792 craftsmen from the town and its surrounding area formed the Washington County Mechanical Society to promote local manufactures. Their efforts included activities from corresponding with other mechanical societies on the latest news and developments to constructing a tin manufactory in the town of Washington, which they operated until at least 1800, when its extant records cease. It is noteworthy that the Mechanical Society also organized occasional charitable relief efforts for distressed local citizens, such as their joint effort to construct a house for a local widow in the late 1790s, providing some possible evidence that the early townsmen were steeped in the traditions of mutual social responsibility and the moral economy; even an association dedicated to economic development could not ignore its community duty.⁵⁵ Similarly in 1821, more than one hundred Washington Borough women formed an organization pledged to shun English imports, particularly garments, in favor of American-produced goods, linking the effort directly to liberty and the national good, with leading resolution stating “the encouragement of Domestic Manufactures is indispensable to the substantial interests, the permanent welfare and the real independence of the United States.”⁵⁶

Associations dedicated to national and local economic development were important in cementing the relationship between the countryside and Washington Borough, and their interconnection is also demonstrated in the advertisements contained in the surviving local newspapers. In the 1810s and 1820s, it was altogether common for merchants, grocers, craftsmen, and other small businesses to accept produce in lieu of cash for transactions. Indeed, in Washington’s early days, barley production was so prevalent that the crop was a widely

⁵⁴ Larson, *The Market Revolution in America*, 104-05.

⁵⁵ *Washington Reporter*, October 3, 1910.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, August 15, 1908.

accepted medium of exchange in the county, as were distilled spirits.⁵⁷ Barter terms were still common in the 1810s and 1820s, and they continued to appear in local advertisements.

Merchants and other businesses frequently noted that they would accept various types of farm produce in lieu of cash, although credit terms were virtually absent from advertisement.

Washington *Reporter* owner/editor William Sample, for example, advertised in his own newspaper in 1825 that subscriptions could be paid in “marketable wheat,” at the cash equivalent of fifty cents per bushel.⁵⁸ Similarly, wool carder John Kerr, located in Buffalo Township about ten miles west of Washington Borough, notified potential customers that “almost all kinds of produce will be received in payment at the highest trading price,” and that “those paying grain must deliver the same by the first of December next,” indicating that prolonged transactions were still a normal part of its business.⁵⁹ Washington Borough tanner Hugh Workman advertised in 1825 his need for chestnut, oak, and other tree barks, which he offered to purchase in exchange for leather.⁶⁰ Barter offers continued to appear in newspaper advertisements into the 1830s, but faded significantly by 1840s and all but disappeared in the 1850s, indicating their declining significance in the county and Borough’s economy. Indeed, an 1843 wool advertisement in the *Reporter* detailed the prevailing local cash terms and quoted the latest wool prices from Philadelphia and New York City; nowhere was any form of non-cash exchange even mentioned⁶¹ One economic hallmark in small towns and rural areas prior to the market revolution was the barter system’s centrality in economic exchange, with many transactions taking months or even years to complete, and with either goods or services pledged as the

⁵⁷ Ibid; Pearl E. Wagner, “Economic Conditions in Western Pennsylvania During the Whiskey Rebellion,” *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (October 1927), 202.

⁵⁸ Ibid, February 7, 1825.

⁵⁹ Ibid, August 1, 1825.

⁶⁰ Ibid, May 4, 1825.

⁶¹ *Washington Reporter*, June 10, 1843.

medium of exchange. This system required a significant degree of social stability which would allow for sufficient time and trust to exist between sellers and buyers that the transaction obligations would be fulfilled or performed as promised.⁶² Moreover, in a time and place where money was often in scarce supply, it was simply impractical to demand it as an exclusive medium of exchange, and dealing in commodities was a routine part of almost and merchant or businessman's job until well into the antebellum period. But as the town and county were drawn further into the commercial markets and cash-credit nexus, barter slowly faded from major transactions.

Local Banking: 1809-1860

Banking was a contentious issue nationwide in the first half of the nineteenth century, with Westerners often particularly wary of their influences. As historian Richard E. Ellis notes, market-oriented Jeffersonians may have opposed Federalist banking policies, but they were not necessarily hostile to banks themselves, and the number of state-chartered banking institutions increased from 90 in 1811 to more than 300 by 1820. But these smaller banks were often insufficiently capitalized and were excessively risky in their practices, resulting in many failures.⁶³ But as the market economy began to grow in significance, money was clearly a more efficient medium of exchange for economic transactions, particularly non-local ones. Credit was also an increasingly important part of business, and banks were able to meet both needs.

Although many people viewed banks as an unwise and dangerous concentration of economic power under a small group's control, their benefits could not be ignored, as evidenced in their rapid spread after about 1800. By the early nineteenth century, as historian Robert

⁶² Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 33-35.

⁶³ 6. Richard E. Ellis, "The Market Revolution and the Transformation of American Politics," in *The Market Revolution in America*, eds. Stokes and Conway, 156.

Wiebe observes, banks began gaining wider credence as useful institutions which helped enhance general economic opportunity. But as the century progressed and bank charters in Pennsylvania and other states multiplied quickly, banking became a highly contentious conflict point regarding economic development and the market revolution.⁶⁴ Indeed, the Second Bank of the United States was perhaps the most politically explosive issue of the 1830s, and the so-called Bank War exposed the lingering widespread beliefs that these institutions potentially threatened republican liberty. But in a wider sense it also reflected embedded popular fears of any corporate or other institution gaining undue or excessive influence. Banks were an important factor in bringing the cash and credit nexus to any town, and Washington Borough's banking experience began relatively early for its region. Despite whatever local suspicions existed regarding banks, these institutions quickly became a permanent feature in the town's economy.

The Bank of Philadelphia, chartered by the Pennsylvania legislature in 1804, received authorization five years later to establish eight branch banks across the state, provided that the local population was agreeable to it. Washington Borough was selected as one of the branch locations, a testament to its early economic strength and population base, and with a majority's approval, began operations there in 1810 and lasting until 1822. Prominent Washington attorney Parker Campbell, uncle to local theologian Alexander Campbell, who founded the Disciples of Christ movement, served as its president during its relatively brief life. The Borough and County's first original institution, the Bank of Washington, followed shortly after the Bank of Philadelphia's branch opened. Had these state and local banks been widely perceived as incompatible with the public interest, popular opposition would have doubtlessly been an insurmountable obstacle, but according to local historian Alfred Creigh, the grand jury

⁶⁴ Robert H. Wiebe, *The Opening of American Society: From the Adoption of the Constitution to the Eve of Disunion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 152-153.

impaneled to review the Bank's charter application endorsed it strongly, saying "we conceive it to be our duty to...encourage all institutions, companies, or associations that have for their end the genuine interests of the county. They conceive that the contemplated association called the Bank of Washington is of that character," and accordingly, the grand jury asked the legislature to approve the charter. Again, it is clear that to be acceptable, a bank or any other corporation had to be perceived as conducive to the public interest at large. The state's minimum requirements for initial stock subscriptions and payments were quickly met, and the charter was officially presented to the Bank of Washington's directors on July 5, 1814.⁶⁵

The list of initial investors, numbering 270 individuals, all subscribed their shares between March and June 1814, showing a relatively strong commitment, at least among the local business class, to secure the charter and commence operations as soon as possible. The initial investment pattern shows some similarity to local turnpike road companies, with most investors buying a modest number of shares and a few purchasing larger quantities, although not so large as to arouse suspicions of manipulation.⁶⁶ Although large and distant banks were widely viewed with suspicion or hostility, a local bank run by local businessmen was apparently far less ominous to the local population, for these men lived and worked among the people and had established a considerable collective reservoir of trust. The Bank of Washington conducted business without incident until it forfeited its charter in November 1818 due to a tax violation after declaring a stock dividend. Although the state soon restored the charter, the Panic of 1819 destroyed its viability. In August 1819 it was officially closed and placed in trusteeship, led by

⁶⁵ Creigh, *History of Washington County*, 197-99; Crumrine, *History of Washington County*, 524-525.

⁶⁶ List of Subscribers to the Bank of Washington, June 27, 1814, RG-26, Letters Patent, Box 1, PSA.

its former president Thomas H. Baird, soon to be a Jackson supporter, to enforce prior contracts and close the bank's affairs, a process not fully completed until 1834.⁶⁷

The next state-chartered financial institution to headquarter in the Borough was the Franklin Bank of Washington, which began operations in 1836, once again with primarily local ownership and under local leaders, many of whom had been involved in the pioneering Bank of Washington. The charter authorized the bank's directors to sell their stock in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia as well as in Washington, but the prohibited other banks from purchasing any stock, indicating both the growing statewide financial network and concerns about undue risk or manipulation.⁶⁸ The large state-chartered banks in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh dwarfed the Franklin Bank, which was capitalized at just \$120,000 in the 1840s, a lower amount than even some comparable nearby small town banks, like the Monongahela Bank of Brownsville, but its long survival attests to both competent management and local support. Indeed, a 1910 *Washington Reporter* article claimed the Franklin Bank was one of only three banks west of the Allegheny Mountains never to have suspended specie payments between the Panic of 1837 and the Civil War.⁶⁹ During rocky financial times in 1854, when bank failures were increasing, several Pittsburgh newspapers speculated about the Franklin Bank's possible poor financial condition, prompting the *Washington Reporter* to assure them and the reading public that the bank was indeed sound. "In this region the Franklin Bank stands 'A No. 1,' and that it should occupy so high a position in the confidence of our people will not be matter of surprise when the fact is stated that its stock stands higher this day than it has for many years," the *Reporter's*

⁶⁷ Crumrine, 526; *Washington Reporter*, October 3, 1910.

⁶⁸ *Laws of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Passed at the Session of 1835-36* (Harrisburg, PA: Theodore Fenn, 1836), 68-72.

⁶⁹ *Washington Reporter*, October 3, 1910.

editor wrote, adding as evidence that ten shares had recently sold at a three dollar per share premium at an estate sale in Washington Borough.⁷⁰

From its inception in 1836 to beyond its reorganization into the First National Bank of Washington in 1864, the Franklin Bank's directors, president, and cashier were all drawn from the same circle of local business, civic, and social leaders. Between 1836 and 1888, the bank had only four presidents; Borough merchant David Acheson served from its foundation until his death in 1842, when he was succeeded by Daniel Houston, who resigned slightly over a year later ostensibly because other commitments prevented him from giving full attention to the bank. The Whig ex-Congressman Thomas M.T. McKennan replaced Houston and held the position until his death in 1852, when the late Alexander Reed's son, Colin M. Reed, also the Presbyterian Church's treasurer, remaining in the executive position for more than 35 years, until his death in 1888. The Franklin Bank presidencies are another example of how local elites provided leadership, long term stability, and direction to important enterprises and associations, provided of course that the citizenry continued to view their conduct as public-spirited and trustworthy.⁷¹ Similarly, the bank's directors were drawn from among Reed, Houston, and McKennan's community associates and colleagues, and they likewise tended to serve for long durations, usually until retirement or death. Long-term continuity also defined the Franklin Bank's clerk and cashier positions. Samuel Cunningham served as clerk from 1836 until his death over twenty years later, and cashier John Marshel remained in his position from the bank's chartering until his resignation in 1857 due to old age infirmities. Indeed, in accepting Marshel's resignation, the directors noted his strong role in keeping the bank's financial affairs in order even during lean financial times that plunged many other regional banks into crisis or

⁷⁰ Ibid, December 6, 1854.

⁷¹ Crumrine, 526-528; *Washington Reporter*, December 30, 1843.

insolvency.⁷² As the market revolution's institutional frameworks expanded between the early nineteenth century and the Civil War, setting the stage for the industrial transformation of the 1880s and 1890s, the same group of community leaders continued to act, or at least be perceived as, stewards for the public good even as they expanded their own business and financial opportunities and horizons. They provided leadership for the new institutions created to service the market economy's increasingly complex and rapid demands.

Complementing the Franklin Bank, Washington Borough also hosted two privately owned and run banking houses by the 1830s, the Hazlett Bank and the Smith Bank. By 1837, free banking laws allowed any applicant to obtain a charter without having a special legislative act as long as certain criteria were met, allowing for so-called wildcat banks to open in many states, including Pennsylvania. Private bankers perhaps relied even more heavily on a strong public reputation for reliability and trustworthiness than an incorporated institution like the Franklin Bank, which had shareholders and directors, to help ensure an honest operation, whereas a private bank was solely in the hands of its owner and operator. Naturally, both Samuel Hazlett and William Smith were well-established and respected members of Washington's notables with long business and social ties to the town and county. Before turning to banking in 1837, Hazlett had been a successful merchant and once operated a woolen manufactory and a flouring mill, giving him extensive contacts with both borough residents and the outlying farming community. Opening his banking house in 1838, William Smith was also a successful and highly regarded Washington Borough merchant who also served on the Franklin Bank's board of directors, and he continued to operate his dry goods store along with the bank.⁷³

⁷² Crumrine, 526-528; Beers, 189.

⁷³ Crumrine, 198, 528; Beers, 114-117; *Washington Reporter*, October 3, 1910; Joseph F. McFarland, *20th Century History of Washington and Washington County, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Richmond-Arnold Publishing, 1910), 257. McFarland erroneously dates the Smith bank to 1828.

Like the Franklin Bank, the Hazlett and Smith operations survived the financially turbulent antebellum period intact; indeed, the Smith Bank was prosperous enough in 1860 to begin construction on so-called Smith's Iron Hill, an expensive large brick and iron edifice adjacent to the county court house, which still stands in the early 21st century.

Washington Borough's banks in the early nineteenth century were a vital aspect to Washington's growing market revolution experience, for they helped bring the town and county further into the cash and credit nexus that was increasingly necessary in the fast-paced and impersonal universe of the modern market economy, where customers and suppliers often did business through third-party intermediaries. Jackson's Bank War was a highly contested issue in Washington County, and although state-chartered, locally owned and run banks were not as controversial, they still elicited some opposition, but not enough to derail the Franklin Bank or the two private banks. Even two decades later, in early 1855, the *Whig Reporter* and *Democrat Examiner* were again sparring on the bank issue, with the *Reporter* chiding the *Examiner* for its opposition to a new state-chartered bank in Washington County and noting that Democrats elsewhere in Pennsylvania and in other states were finding state banks compatible with their political values. In its banking defense, the *Reporter* was also careful to explicitly note that "there should be extreme caution exercised on the part of both Governor and Legislature in multiplying bank capital in any way."⁷⁴ Washington had both banking supporters and detractors, and although bank opponents were even suspicious of local institutions, they at least tolerated them, perhaps because of their practical benefits and local banks' power to menace the public good was limited, and their leaders were men known and trusted in their communities.

⁷⁴ *Washington Reporter*, February 7, 1855.

A Community of Small Players: Commerce and Manufacturing, c. 1800s-1860

The market revolution's chief economic impacts in the period between the 1810s and 1860 included transportation improvements, commercial agriculture's rapid expansion, and the development of local banking institutions and the cash nexus's gradual move to predominance. There was not, however, a comparable expansion in large-scale manufacturing and industry during this time period. As already noted, Pittsburgh was western Pennsylvania's commercial and industrial heart. Additionally, the city of Wheeling, Virginia, only a short distance to Washington's west, represented a secondary industrial concentration. If large-scale industrial manufacturing ventures were going to establish themselves in the Upper Ohio Valley, Pittsburgh and Wheeling were far more attractive for operations than the country towns, like Washington. As with other rural counties in southwestern Pennsylvania, Washington County remained overwhelmingly agricultural, and the manufacturing and mining that did exist was modest and relatively small-scale. The only exceptions were pockets along the Monongahela River where coal mining and ship-building were expanding industries, but even these were not powerful enough to make an impact on the county's overall economic patterns and the social demographics that derived from it. Washington Borough was an important center of commerce and finance for the county, but it was not a major manufacturing center. Washington's early manufactories and mills were largely designed to process local grains and wool, and manufactured goods continued to be produced by small independent craftsmen for local customers. In the 1840s, the Frisbie & Hitchcock Foundry and the S.B.& C. Hayes Carriage Company both commenced operations, and although they were rather large businesses by the Borough's standards, both were still relatively small scale operations, not mass producers. Small-scale craftsmen and tradesmen typified the Borough's manufacturing sector until the

1880s. Indeed, ambitious local businessmen, like Joseph McKnight, who wanted to enter the iron manufacturing business in the 1850s, saw Washington Borough as too small and isolated to meet his needs, establishing his mill instead in Pittsburgh's Birmingham district on the Monongahela River, where his operation would have better access to transportation routes, export markets, larger financial markets, and greater prospects for expansion.⁷⁵

Steam engines had been used locally since at least 1814 with the establishment of the Washington Steam-Mill & Manufacturing Company, one of whose founders was the ever-present Alexander Reed. The company operated a four-story steam powered flouring mill and a wool carding machine at the south end of Main Street until it was destroyed by fire in 1831. The Hayes Carriage Manufactory installed a four-horsepower steam engine in the mid-1840s, and reportedly ran it three days a week to complete the machine work on carriage bodies and frames. The Buckley Woolen Factory, established around 1843, had a fifteen-horsepower engine with the capacity to turn 17,000 pounds of wool into 1200 yards of flannel annual. In addition, a 12-horse powered steam tannery was operating on the west end by the 1850's.⁷⁶ But certainly the most visible steam engines arrived in Washington Borough in 1857 on the locomotives of the Hempfield Railroad. Steam powered engines, a hallmark of the early industrial revolution, had made a relatively early appearance in Washington, and their number, power, and significance to production were increasing over time. Railroads were such an important issue between 1830 and the Civil War that it will be considered separately and in depth.

Washington's craftsmen collectively worked in a variety of trades to meet local demand and service the passing migrants on the National Road. Shops tended to employ only a few

⁷⁵ Joseph McKnight to Alexander W. Acheson, April 21, 1842, ed. Jane M Fulcher, *Family Letters in a Civil War Century: Achesons, Wilsons, Brownsons, Wisharts, and Others of Washington, Pennsylvania* (Avella, PA: Privately Published, 1986), 88-89.

⁷⁶ McFarland, *20th Century History of Washington*, 467-468; Creigh, 356.

hands, with the owner working alongside his men, and many traditional workplace patterns from pre-market revolution times also persisted. The 1850 manufactures census recorded 33 manufacturers in Washington Borough with an annual production value greater than \$500, and only four employed more than ten men, with three of those employing fewer than 20. The S.B. & C. Hayes Carriage Company, with 33 hands, almost doubled the next largest employers, the Frisbie & Hitchcock Foundry, and George W. Boyd's shoe factory, both of which had 18 employees. Twenty manufacturers, nearly two-thirds, had fewer than five employees, demonstrating the persistent small-scale players in the local economy.⁷⁷ The pattern of small-scale craft manufacturing dominated the townships and small boroughs across the county with only rare exceptions, mostly on or near the Monongahela River, which formed the county's eastern border. The small borough of West Brownsville, for example, hosted two ship-building firms, with 40 and 70 employees, and in Carroll Township, proprietor John Markle operated a substantial glass factory with 35 hands and an annual output valued at \$20,000, four thousand dollars higher than the Hayes Carriage Company's annual value, and the Aaghenbaugh Coal Mine had work for 28 men. Further up the river in Union Township, the Logan & Duncan Coal Mine employed 25 miners, and Balsley & Company doubled them with fifty. But these kinds of businesses were exceptions to the widespread pattern across the county's hinterland and in its boroughs, including the county seat. Washington Borough and its surrounding county had not yet entered the industrial age.

Some Washington Borough proprietary craftsmen still trained apprentices and acted in the time-honored manner of *in loco parentis*, as seen in an 1824 indenture contract between Washington *Reporter* owner/editor William Sample and young Thomas Brown, who with his

⁷⁷ Department of the Interior, *Manufactures Census for Washington County, PA*, 1850, Microfilm Collection, Pennsylvania State Library, Harrisburg, PA.

father's support, signed a 6-year and 10-month apprenticeship agreement, in which Sample would teach Brown the printing trade while providing food, clothing, lodging, and two years of day schooling. In return, Thomas Brown promised to obey all lawful orders, faithfully execute his duties, avoid gambling and marriage, protect Sample's property and never run away, making it a classic example of a master-apprentice contract. Although not stated directly in the contract, the clauses about gambling and marriage imply Sample's responsibility for his apprentice's moral well-being as well as his physical and intellectual needs.⁷⁸

The Borough's 1850 manuscript population census does not specifically delineate apprentice status in occupational titles, but an occupation classification coupled with a young age and residence in an established craftsman's household make such associations rather clearly implicit. For example, the Sheldon B. Hayes household contained not only his actual family members, but six "coach makers" ranging in ages from 17 to 20, while another five "coach makers" aged 18-22 boarded in co-owner Charles Hayes' household. It is likely that these young men were apprentice-type employees, even if they had no formal apprentice contract; the Hayes brothers were teaching them how to build carriages and boarding them in their own homes in a manner similar to a formal apprenticeship. Similarly, local cabinet maker and shop owner Thomas Bryson maintained four apparent apprentices in his household, while his competitor Abraham Wolfe boarded six teenage apprentices.⁷⁹ In addition to training apprentices in the traditional pattern, sons and other family members continued to show a propensity for following the father's craft or trade. Tannery owner David Wolf, for example, had two sons in his household, aged 19 and 25 who were also listed in the census as tanners, suggesting that they

⁷⁸ Apprentice Indenture Contract between William Sample and Benjamin Brown/Thomas Brown, June 13, 1824, Ewing Collection, Box A-4, WCHSA.

⁷⁹ Department of the Interior. *Manuscript Population Census for Washington Borough, PA*, June 1850, Citizens' Library Microfilm Collection, Washington, PA.

were working for their father and likely to take over the family business in the future. Even some merchants housed employees in their own homes, including Colin M. Reed, who boarded four young clerks, two of whom hailed from Scotland, the Reed ancestral home.⁸⁰

The Borough's 1860 population census does indicate master and apprentice status, and the results demonstrate again that craftsmen still trained apprentices in an apparently traditional way. There are 30 apprentices of all kinds listed, and thirteen craftsmen of various types who boarded at least one apprentice in their home. Although traditional apprenticeships and taking charge of them *in loco parentis* was inevitably fading along with other forms of the pre-market revolution economy, census data clearly shows that it was still fighting a rear-guard action in Washington Borough even on the Civil War's eve. Some apprentices still lived with their parents while learning their trade, as with young Theodore Turner, a 16-year-old shoemaker's son who was a carpentry apprentice, likely under the next door neighbor, a master carpenter.⁸¹ It is clear that master-apprentice relations could be found in Washington Borough from the early nineteenth century until the Civil War, although it was increasingly rare afterwards.

Even as transportation improvements, commercial ties, and financial institutions spread, traditional small-scale craft and tradesmen, and lingering remnants traditional master-apprentice relationships, continued to dominate the local economy's manufacturing elements. The lack of a true industrial base in Washington Borough also meant the absence of a true working class, which was growing rapidly in the industrializing manufacturing and mining centers in the East, as well as closer to home in the cities of Pittsburgh and Wheeling. Although a true working class had not yet formed, there were embryonic signs that it was beginning to take shape by the Civil War era. In 1850, the Borough census listed 68 day-laborers, men with no particular trade or

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Department of the Interior, *Manuscript Population Census for Washington Borough, PA*, June 1860, Citizens' Library Microfilm Collection, Washington, PA.

skills who worked for some kind of wage, whether for cash or in-kind payments, at whatever rate he could negotiate. Most day laborers held no real property, with only 11 of the 68 claiming at least some real estate ownership. The 1860 census reveals a significant numerical expansion in day-laborers over the preceding decade. In 1850, Washington's 68 day laborers were the largest single occupational category, edging out the carpenters, who numbered fifty men. By 1860, the number of laborers rose to 123, a 95% increase, making them by far the largest male occupational category, dwarfing the now second-largest male classification, clerks, whose ranks increased from 20 to 34 during the 1850s, perhaps reflecting the growing paper network and commercialization in the Borough's business world.⁸² Carpenters still represented the largest skilled manual labor group with 33 men in 1860, but this represents a 34% decline from a decade earlier.

As with so many other western towns and cities during this period, Washington Borough tended to have a higher persistence rate among skilled tradesmen and other established property-owning men than among general day laborers, who were much more likely to move from place to place. Washington's day-laborer population increased from 68 to 123 between 1850 and 1860, but when estimating the true persistence rate among day laborers it is necessary to factor out men who were surely or likely dead in 1860. Based on a relatively advanced age in 1850 or the persistence of a widow or other family in 1860, ten laborers were confirmed or likely to have died, leaving a pool of 58 men on which to base a persistence estimate in 1860. The 1860 census shows only 19 of the surviving 58 day laborers still living in the town, meaning that about two-thirds of the 1850 day-laborer population had left Washington Borough within a ten-year period. Thus in 1860, only 15% of the 123 day laborers had lived in Washington for at least a decade,

⁸² The Borough manuscript population census for 1860 recorded 87 domestics and other servants in private homes and hotels, nearly all of whom were female, making them the second largest overall employment category.

demonstrating a large proportion of relative strangers to the town among its laborers and their families. It is also important to note that 12 of the 19 persistent laborers, or just under two-thirds, between 1850 and 1860 were African-American men, suggesting that transience among white laborers was even higher than the overall average. Of these 19 persistent day laborers from 1850, nine still maintained the same occupational classification in 1860, while ten had moved to a specific occupation. Two black laborers in 1850 were hostlers, and another was a teamster in 1860, while five white laborers had moved into new categories by 1860, including a shoemaker, carpenter, turnkey, gardener, and stone mason.⁸³

Transience and persistence among skilled craft and tradesman proved had a more varied experience. Some tradesmen, such as carpenters and masons had a relatively strong persistence rate. For example, the eleven stone masons and cutters listed in the 1850 Borough population census had a 60% persistence rate in 1860 after factoring out the one mason who died during this period. Interestingly, there were other crafts or trades which, although smaller in number, also showed relatively low persistence rates in the last prewar decade. Of the Borough's eight tanners in 1850, only three remained ten years later. As historian Jonathan Prude notes, utilizing consecutive censuses to follow transience rates typically underestimates the true situation, for they do not account for people who came and went between censuses, and it also "masks the transiency of family members whose household heads remained in place."⁸⁴ It is almost certainly the case that transience rates in Washington Borough, in virtually all occupational areas, was somewhat higher than the census figures indicate. Regardless of the precise rate, emigrating craftsmen and other valued economic players was significant enough for the *Reporter*

⁸³ Department of the Interior, *US Manuscript Population Census for Washington Borough, 1850*, Citizens' Library Microfilm Collection; Ibid, 1860.

⁸⁴ Jonathan Prude, *The Coming Industrial Order: Town and Factory Life in Rural Massachusetts* (1983; repr., Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 23.

to complain about it in an April 1855 editorial, lamenting that “from this borough, carpenters, brick masons, and other descriptions of mechanics, all good workmen, have gone to push their fortunes in the far West,” also asserting that hard-working men could carve out just as prosperous a life in Washington as further west, and adding that the Pennsylvania town had schools and strong churches that added to the quality of life, a factor which the far West could not match. An anonymous letter to the editor from an ex-Washingtonian living in Illinois rebutted the *Reporter’s* editorial point by point just three weeks later, arguing that everything from employment opportunities to soil quality were superior in the far West, that morals and public conduct were no worse there than in Washington County. Ambitious men, the writer added, had a far greater likelihood to experience material advancement in Illinois than in Washington, Pennsylvania. For many Washington men, particularly younger, less skilled, and property-less ones, moving on to greener pastures, usually in the far West, outweighed any desire to remain in town. Indeed, high transience rates were common in the recently settled and frontier areas west of the Appalachians.⁸⁵

As historian Christopher Clark has noted, property ownership was a key determinant in a man’s decision to stay in a location or seek his fortune elsewhere, and in Washington Borough, real property ownership gives further credence to Clark’s observation. A random sample from the 1850 census of 30 men between age 20 and 45 with at least some real property, with no control for occupational classification, reveals that 23, or 77%, were still living in the Borough a decade later, showing a strong relationship between property ownership and residential persistence.⁸⁶ As with so many other towns in the American West, the property-owners formed

⁸⁵ *Washington Reporter*, April 4, 1855; Ibid, April 25, 1855; Robert Wiebe, *Opening of American Society*, 132.

⁸⁶ Christopher Clark, *Social Change in America: From the Revolution Through the Civil War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 146.; Department of the Interior, Manuscript Population Census for Washington Borough, 1850; Ibid, 1860. The 30-men sample of property owners included shoemakers, blacksmiths, carpenters, cabinet makers,

the long-term social core, while those without property, and hence fewer ties to their communities, tended to be much more transient.⁸⁷

Complementing the predominant small-scale enterprises that defined the local economy was relatively widespread property ownership, particularly among adult white men engaged in the skilled crafts and trades, professionals, merchants, and other business proprietors. A random sample of 30 men with a skilled trade or craft with a minimum age of 30 reveals that 19, or nearly two-thirds, indicated that they owned at least some real estate. Similarly, among the Borough's 34 merchants, physicians, and attorneys with the same minimum age of 30 years, 67% had at least some real property. As Richard Ellis and others have noted, the market revolution brought with it an increased disparity of wealth in American society. As market forces took root and matured in any given community, its benefits accrued most decisively to those who were already propertied, educated, and well-connected.⁸⁸ In Washington, the market revolution's propensity to create significant wealth disparities was perhaps present, but not as exaggerated as in major commercial and manufacturing centers, like New York, Philadelphia, or even Pittsburgh or Wheeling. The population manuscript census for both 1850 and 1860 provides a dollar value for a person's real estate holdings, and although they cannot be interpreted as definitive numbers, they do provide at least a general estimate. A comparison of the Borough's fifteen wealthiest real estate holders in the 1850 census against a random sample of 30 real estate-owning skilled craft and tradesmen with a minimum age of 30 yields some interesting results. The town's top fifteen real estate holders in 1850 ranged from \$9500 to \$76,000, with a mean value of \$31,270, whereas the random sample of real estate-owning craft

hatters, tailors, teachers, tanners, saddle makers, tobacconists, plasterers, harness maker, a machinist, and a brick moulder.

⁸⁷ Manuscript Population Census for Washington Borough, 1850; Ibid, 1860.

⁸⁸ 6. Richard Ellis, "Market Revolution and the Transformation of American Politics," 162.

and tradesmen had stated values ranging from \$400 to \$4000, with a mean value of \$1693. The average real estate value among the town's top landowning elites was just over 18 times as great as the mean from the sample group, perhaps indicating that clear economic class differences were developing by midcentury. A similar situation appears in the 1860 manuscript census. The top 15 real estate owners in the Borough ranged from \$18,000 to \$55,000, with a mean value of \$34,980, whereas a random sample of 30 craft and tradesmen claiming real estate ownership range in values from \$500 to \$7000, with a mean average value at \$2035. The top fifteen real estate owners had a mean average value of approximate 17 times greater than the average real property owning craftsmen, and within standard deviation of the 1850 sample.⁸⁹ These comparisons demonstrate a definite economic gulf between the Borough's elite and its tradesmen and craftsmen, but the town's economic leaders were not so wealthy that an unbridgeable class chasm yet existed, as it did in large commercial cities. Washington Borough's elites were nothing like the powerful Boston Associates or the burgeoning Wall Street financiers.

The Borough's economy, still anchored in small-scale enterprise during the antebellum period, was the county's most important local commercial hub. In 1843 the *Reporter* published a local tax report listing all the county's licensed merchant establishments by borough and township. Not surprisingly, Washington Borough had by far the largest concentration of merchants anywhere in the county, with 35 of the total 135, or 25.9%. By comparison, Canonsburg and Monongahela City, the second and third largest boroughs, had 10 and 14 merchant establishments. But together, the three most populous boroughs accounted for 43.7% of all the county's licensed merchant establishments, demonstrating a relationship between the towns and commercial activity.⁹⁰ The quantity of merchant licenses does not tell the entire

⁸⁹ Manuscript Population Census for Washington Borough, 1850; Ibid, 1860.

⁹⁰ *Washington Reporter*, March 1844.

story, for not all licenses were the same, being instead classed and priced differently, probably depending on sales volumes or type of merchandise. Of the 38 merchant licensees in the county assessed at least \$10, 21 (55.2%) operated in Washington Borough, as did all nine licensees who paid more than \$10.50. The relative dearth of merchants in most of the townships adjacent or convenient to Washington Borough is probably due to their reliance on the nearby town's facilities. Finally, the only two county merchants assessed at \$20, William Smith and Colin M. Reed, were both Washington Borough men.

Another indicator in Washington Borough that home production was giving way to market transactions was the sharp decline in the number of milk cows. In 1820, the Borough's tax records indicate that 107 of the 161 taxable residents (66.5%) owned at least one cow. Among the cow owners, 86 owned one animal, 20 owned two cows, and one led the Borough with three. Cow ownership patterns in 1820 demonstrate that a majority of households had a cow to provide fresh dairy products for family needs or small bartering with neighbors. The Borough tax rolls for 1834-35 show 139 of 389 resident taxpayers owning 152 cows, with all but 13 owning a single animal. The pattern indicates that cow ownership for household production or barter with neighbors was still significant, but in sharp relative decline. In 1847, the tax records indicate 120 cow owners out of 574 total taxpayers, or 21%, another significant decline from 1835. Of the 120 cow owners, all but six had a single cow, and none had more than two, again indicating that cow ownership was largely for domestic use or small barter. By contrast, the 1857 Borough tax list shows a mere 24 cow owners out of 754 residential taxpayers, a paltry three percent, with all cow owners but two owning a single animal. Washington residents had

either developed a strong distaste for dairy products or the town had become almost fully tied to market transactions for its milk and butter.⁹¹

Table 4-3: Cow Ownership in Washington Borough 1820-1857⁹²

Year	Total number of cows	Cow owners as percentage of taxpaying residents
1820	129	66.5
1834	152	35.7
1847	126	21.0
1857	26	3.2

Voluntary Associations

Historians have noted how voluntary associations spread rapidly to become an integral part of American civic and social life from the early nineteenth century to the Civil War, often accelerating in tandem with the market revolution's spreading impacts. Voluntary associations were popular ways to elicit public action on particularly important issues in any given community, and whether dedicated to social, economic, or other public issues. Historian Paul Johnson argues that the expanding and somewhat disorderly waged labor forces, and the growing social gulf between them and their employer, sparked a series of reform-oriented voluntary associations and religious revivals in cities and towns, led mostly by socially-conservative and well-established businessmen, merchants, professionals, clergy, and even some craft and

⁹¹ Washington Borough Tax Rolls 1834-35, 1847, and 1857, Citizens' Library Microfilm Collection, Washington, PA.

⁹² Ibid.

tradesmen, to exert social control and ensure civic order.⁹³ Washington Borough, too, had a long history of voluntary associations, ranging from the aforementioned economic-booster groups, to social reform movements, like the Moral Society, temperance societies, and later a Howard Association and Bethel Society, dedicated to helping the “deserving” poor and river boatmen, respectively. Voluntary organizations also formed to serve other civic needs, from fire brigades to lyceums. Some associations, like agricultural and mechanical societies, were closely related to the market revolution, but it would be erroneous to attribute the social reform impulse entirely to market forces, for this was a town and county inhabited overwhelmingly by strict Presbyterians, Methodists, and other reform-minded Protestants who despised drunkenness and all forms of social disorder.⁹⁴

Washington was a relatively small town amidst a slowly growing rural country, and their conception of advancement included fostering organizations whose missions were dedicated to the public good, and social stability was integral to their vision of progress. For example, the National Road, itself an early market revolution product, was notorious for liquor consumption among drivers, hostlers, travelers, and others, a situation that was bound to spur anxiety in pious locals and encourage counter-action against it, and a county temperance society, headquartered in Washington Borough, formed within a decade of the National Road’s local opening. In addition to some socially questionable behaviors in their own community, socially conservative Washingtonians with access to newspapers or other sources of information had to be aware of similar but more dramatic disruptions in large cities seemed rooted in the social changes created by the market revolution’s accelerating influences. The town’s opinion leaders in particular were well aware of events in the large cities, including the spreading working class and workingmen’s

⁹³ Johnson, *A Shopkeeper’s Millennium*, 60-61.

⁹⁴ Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 159.

unions and parties, Catholic immigrants' rapid proliferation, and demon rum. For example, in the early 1840s, Philadelphia's burgeoning industrial and commercial economy combined with increasing distress in Ireland to attract large numbers of immigrants to the Quaker City, and rising anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic sentiment erupted into violence in the spring and summer of 1844, a major upheaval that observant Washingtonians could not help but notice thanks to coverage in the local press.⁹⁵ Similarly, nearby Pittsburgh was rapidly filling with immigrants, including a large Irish Catholic population, by the 1830s, and like Philadelphia had its share of labor-management conflicts.

For provincial Washington, it is possible that preemptive citizen action was made more urgent as the accelerating social changes and frequent disorder in the large cities caused them to project their fears onto their own community; turning towards temperance and moral enforcement to keep their society stable and orderly before it became uncontrollable would be a prudent course. Furthermore, the town's strong Protestant influences, especially among the more stable propertied elements, imbued the faithful with a sense of social responsibility and fervent desire to shape the town's social character in accordance with their values, which emphasized hard work, self-improvement, and temptation's avoidance. Washingtonians were also heirs to a strong republican tradition, forged by their Revolutionary forebears and sharpened in the Whiskey Rebellion in the 1790s. The republican belief in an informed and responsible citizenship was as much part of the local culture as their religious convictions, and had at least a secondary influence in motivating men and women to join the various associations.

Voluntary associations revealed their republican influences with their penchant for written constitutions and by-laws, elected officers, parliamentary-style public meetings with open discussion and voting among the members. The Washington Fire Company, formed in

⁹⁵ *Washington Reporter*, May 18, 1844.

1801, had a detailed constitution of 13 articles, detailing various offices, duties, responsibilities, regular meeting times and attendance rules, and general member responsibilities. Washington Borough citizens and some from the wider county formed a Moral Society in April 1815 to ensure the “suppression of vice and immorality,” holding their meetings in the Presbyterian Church. It adopted a formal constitution which, among other things, created officer positions, stipulated meeting dates, and articulated behavioral rules for its members. At its first open tent meeting in May, it held elections to replace the interim officers and issued a series of resolutions against Sabbath violations, objecting strongly to wagoners frequently hauling merchandise on the county’s major roads on the sacred day, perhaps an early indicator that traditional moral restraints and modern commerce could sometimes come into conflict.⁹⁶

In the same spirit as the Moral Society, the temperance movements that periodically surfaced between the 1820s and 1850s (and again in the 1870s) represent one of the most significant community associational efforts of the era, mobilizing sometimes whole church congregations, holding large public meetings, and engaging in political action, sometimes successfully. Temperance societies were a somewhat different form of voluntary association insofar as they walked the line between social activism and public policy, and they engendered opposition to their efforts, unlike agricultural societies or fire brigades. Protestant religious influences and strict moral codes had always been a social characteristic in Washington, but in the late 1700s whiskey and beer consumption was not targeted as a social ill. Although concerns among more socially conservative and pious citizens doubtlessly existed since the frontier period, it did not translate into a public movement until well into the 1800s.

The Washington College board of trustees, populated by ministers and solid churchgoing men, periodically expressed concern about student exposure to liquor and other vices at local

⁹⁶ “Articles of the Washington Fire Company,” May 18, 1801, Reed Collection, Box 1, WCHSA; Crumrine, 501.

inns, taverns and boardinghouses. In 1816 the trustees noted their disapprobation at local taverns who served liquor to their students, and in 1824 they forbade students from boarding in any tavern without the faculty's approval.⁹⁷ Even in the 1850s, the College trustees still feared their students' morals were being corrupted. In 1851, for instance, the trustees banned students from patronizing "bowling saloons" and "ten-pin alleys," and expanded the 1824 student boarding restrictions to include any hotel or inn that served alcohol; only specific parental permission could allow a student to board in such a place.⁹⁸ It is plausible that the taverns and inns proliferating along the roads and in the towns, especially along the National Road after 1819, raised concerns to a sufficient level to elicit an activist response, such as the Moral Society in the late 1810s and 1820s, and the temperance society which formed in 1829 and attracted over 1100 members from 15 townships and boroughs within its first six months. Although Whigs and their forebears are usually associated with temperance societies to a much greater degree than the Jackson-Democratic types, it is important to note that the Moral Society formed in 1815 and the later temperance societies included among their membership and leadership men with opposing political affiliations. Indeed, erstwhile political rivals sometimes found themselves working together as officers or in other leadership positions. The staunch Jacksonian Democrat, Thomas H. Baird, was instrumental in forming the Washington County Temperance Society in 1829, serving as its first president and supporting the cause for many years.⁹⁹

Throughout this period, temperance was cast in moral, ethical, and religious terms, reflecting the town's strict Protestant social legacy. The Washington County Temperance

⁹⁷ Washington College Board of Trustees Minutes, 1806-1851, Meetings of December 2, 1816 and April 30, 1824. Learned T. Bulman '48 Historic Archives and Museum at Washington & Jefferson College (hereafter HAMWJC), BT1, Vol. 1. The Trustees' Minutes Book is not paginated.

⁹⁸ *Washington College Board of Trustees Minutes, 1806-1851*, BT1, Vol. 1, HAMWJC. Meetings references were held on March 31, 1851 and April 30, 1851.

⁹⁹ *Washington Examiner*, January 2, 1830.

Society circulated a remonstrance to innkeepers, tavern owners, and publicans around the county in early 1836, pleading to their sense of social responsibility, morality, and religious duty to curtail their dealings in intoxicating liquors. Temperance activity in Washington throughout the Jacksonian and antebellum periods was consistently cast as an intertwined appeal to morality, religious obligation, and civic duty.¹⁰⁰ In February 1851, Washington County's temperance achieved a legal ban on the sale of alcohol within the county, but it did not eliminate liquor sales and consumption, with a black market apparently thriving locally.¹⁰¹ In an 1853 editorial, John Bausman, owner of the local *Whig Reporter* and a strident temperance advocate, went so far in his moral outrage as to advocate extralegal means to crush the liquor trade and the irresponsible, immoral, and fallen people whom it infected. "Our whole population should arise as one man and apply the corrective. If the laws existing are powerless for supplying a remedy,... let the good citizens take the law into their own hands and call the offenders against the peace... and well-being of this community to strict accountability," he thundered in a July 1853 editorial. "We consciously believe that even a resort to Lynch Law would be a less evil than an endurance of the evils of which we now complain," he added. Bausman continued his diatribe by complaining that more than a dozen establishments in town were illegally selling intoxicants, attracting ruffians, vagabonds to the town and imperiling its youth and overall moral character, arguing that the town's failure to suppress this vice was nothing short of a dereliction of duty.¹⁰² It is interesting that the 1836 Temperance Society circular and Bausman's 1853 editorial both emphasized the moral dangers to youth as crucial reasons to support temperance, and neither framed the issue in partisan terms. Further evidence that temperance was not a partisan issue is

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, January 2, 1836.

¹⁰¹ *Laws of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania Passed at the Session for 1851* (Harrisburg, PA: Theodore Fenn & Co., State Printers, 1852), 82-83.

¹⁰² *Washington Reporter*, July 13, 1853.

provided by an 1855 Bausman editorial in which he applauded the rival *Examiner*, with whom he disagreed on virtually every political issue, for its recent statements denouncing illegal liquor sales.¹⁰³

Voluntary associations, regardless of their purpose, were led by the same regular group of local elites, mostly businessmen, physicians, attorneys, and ministers. Men like Francis LeMoyne, John Hoge Ewing, Thomas Baird, and Alexander Reed populated the boards of directors and trustees in all the major local institutions, from Washington College to the Franklin Bank and Washington Gas Company, and their reach extended to the voluntary associations, from the agricultural societies to temperance and poverty relief. Historian John Lauritz Larson notes that before the market revolution, “*who* you were had everything to do with how you were treated in public affairs: whether you received credit, merited trust, deserved poor relief, or belonged in a ‘circle of friendship.’”¹⁰⁴ Citizens of Washington Borough and the wider county had long shown deference in leadership to its community elites, in politics, with the same cast of characters tending to dominate electoral candidate slates, church deaconships and trustees, educational institutions, and the voluntary associations of all types, including both social and economic organizations. A man’s public reputation for reliability and responsibility, coupled with economic success and a strong moral character were all vital keys to social or political leadership. There was a clear relationship between wealth and community leadership in Washington Borough, and those who attained such status tended also to be the most persistent residents over the long run. For example, in local transportation development corporations and banking, the town’s elites provided the organization and other expertise in these ventures, but

¹⁰³ Ibid, February 14, 1855.

¹⁰⁴ Larson, *The Market Revolution in America*, 98. Italics is Larson’s.

this leadership had to be perceived as public-spirited, open, and worthy of popular support.¹⁰⁵ Farmers, artisans, and others too engaged in daily toils relied upon their leading co-citizens to direct and oversee the improvements and advancements that were meant to enhance the community's well-being, not just serve narrow interests. These credentialed men provided guidance and direction in voluntary associations, local developmental corporations, church and school administration, and of course, politics. When serving in organizations or causes that were apolitical, men of competing ideological bents were apparently adept at overcoming their political differences to accomplish the task at hand. In efforts as diverse as church administration, temperance societies, literary groups, common school and college administration, turnpike road (and later, railroad) projects, and fire companies, local elites cooperated with overall apparent harmony. But when ideologies and policy agendas clashed in the political arena, cooperation yielded to intense competition and rivalry.

Political Patterns: 1810s to the Eve of Disunion

As in countless cities, towns, and rural communities across the country between the early 1800s and the Civil War, local, state, and national issues simultaneously defined politics, with predominance shifting between levels depending on the moment's circumstances; at some points, local issues monopolized political concerns, while at other times national debates topped the agenda, and in many ways market forces helped shape the political contours. The Whiskey Rebellion itself was at least somewhat related to market forces, with whiskey exports vital to the local farm economy and the Federal excise tax on it perceived as an act of tyranny and abuse. In the nineteenth century's first years, Washington County's strong anti-Federalist attitude and

¹⁰⁵ Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise: America 1815-1840* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 28.

staunch Democratic-Republican loyalties paid some political dividends by helping to bring the National Road through its lands and county seat.

Jeffersonian republicanism dominated Washington County into the 1810s, but voters soon divided between the rising nationalist faction and the more traditional Old Republicans. In the 1820s, local voters shared the Jacksonian disdain for concentrated power in elites' hands, and they responded enthusiastically to the more stringent Jacksonian republicanism which emphasized the popular will, direct participation, and the common man's self-rule to an even greater degree than the older Jeffersonian-style republicanism. Although deferential politics was giving way to greater assertiveness in local voters' attitudes toward more distant state and national leaders and institutions, Washingtonians still tended to rally behind trusted local luminaries to guard their best interests, whether in the town council, the county commission, state legislature, or Congress. Within Washington Borough, the preeminent local businessmen, attorneys, and physicians collectively held, if not a monopoly, a controlling influence on office holding, just as they provided the leadership for voluntary associations and churches. Historian Daniel Feller notes how men of national stature who promoted economic development had to take great care to emphasize their altruistic motives and cast their idea of progress "as the natural fruit of American republicanism and proof of the country's virtue and promise."¹⁰⁶

National issues that most fully gripped Washington's national political attention from the late 1810s through the 1840s centered mostly on economic issues. The initial fissure was between the Democratic-Republicans' nationalist wing, willing to utilize the Federal government's resources and authority to sponsor internal improvements and intensive economic development, and the Old Republican wing, which staunchly opposed Federal activism and defended the traditional Jeffersonian republican belief in a predominantly commercial agrarian

¹⁰⁶ Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise*, 28.

and small-craft economy without great concentrations of wealth or privilege. As historian Michael Holt observes, the nationalist faction gained an upper hand in the immediate post-War of 1812 period, only to see the Panic of 1819 spark resurgent support for Old Republicans.¹⁰⁷ Washington County and its capital borough were torn between these two alternatives, initially casting their lot overwhelmingly with the resurgent Jeffersonian economic traditionalists but with the new Jacksonian assertiveness. The 1824 and 1828 presidential elections demonstrated that the county had, at least for the time being, rejected Federal economic intervention and the specter of concentrated power. Voter participation in Pennsylvania, as in so many states, increased significantly over the 1820s, with a 132% increase in Washington County from the 1820 to the 1824 presidential elections, and a 275% surge between 1824 and 1828, giving the county a 770% increase in presidential electors between in 1820 and 1828 in a county where the population only advanced a mere 6.7% over the 1820s.¹⁰⁸ Charles Sellers observes that across Pennsylvania “a general mass of disaffection had mobilized around Jackson’s standard an apparently invincible coalition of farming and working-class people.”¹⁰⁹ Indeed, many small craft and tradesmen were also part of the powerful Jacksonian alliance. Washington County supported Jackson heavily in all three of his presidential campaigns, and even Washington Borough, the most commercialized spot in the county, followed this pattern, giving Jackson a decisive majority over all three rivals in 1824, for example.¹¹⁰

In politics, however, common republican principles could not fully blunt the growing factionalism, and later partisan discord over concrete and specific issues. Even in the 1824,

¹⁰⁷ Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2-3.

¹⁰⁸ Wilkes University Elections Statistics Project: Pennsylvania Election Statistics 1682-2006, Pennsylvania Presidential Election Returns, 1820, 1824, 1828, <http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/pres/indexpres.html>; Department of the Interior, *Ninth Census of the United States: Statistics of Population* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 58.

¹⁰⁹ Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 189.

¹¹⁰ *Washington Reporter*, November 3, 1824.

1828, and 1832 presidential elections when Jackson held strong majorities in Washington County, his margin tended to be smaller than in most neighboring counties. In 1824, for example, Washington County, along with its neighbor Fayette County, through which the National Road also passed, although heavily for Jackson, gave Old Hickory his lowest margins of victory in Pennsylvania's southwest corner. While the state as a whole gave Henry Clay a mere 4% of the total vote, Washington voted 14% for Clay, and another 8% for Adams, who were both associated with the American System and the nationalist faction, while Fayette County gave Clay just over 23%, his best showing in any Pennsylvania county. The National Road gave both these counties a greater vested interest in the American System, and this is perhaps reflected in their relatively stronger support for Clay and Adams.¹¹¹ But even Washington Borough, where modern market forces were relatively stronger than anywhere in the county, gave a two-thirds majority to Jackson, with the remaining third spread among his rivals.¹¹²

With the National Road's fate in Congress uncertain and its surfaces often in less than optimum condition, and having lost the Bank of Washington during the Panic of 1819, it is small wonder that local voters, like majorities around the nation, soured on the nationalist agenda during the 1820s.¹¹³ Moreover, Washingtonians had a western identity and shared the westerner's suspicions of the East and its power and influence, and the experience from the Whiskey Rebellion may have helped exacerbate their fears. During the 1830s and even into the 1850s, the Democrats tended to hold an overall slight edge in the county's electoral politics, often including Washington Borough, especially by the late 1840s. After a short-lived anti-Masonic party activity in the county, the old nationalist Democrat impulse resurfaced with the

¹¹¹ Wilkes University Election Statistics Project, *Pennsylvania Presidential Election Returns*.
<http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/pres/indexpres.html>.

¹¹² *Washington Reporter*, November 3, 1824.

¹¹³ Sellers, *The Market Revolution*, 137, 163.

new Whig Party, running candidates under that name by 1834. The county and Borough sometimes gave majorities to Whig candidates, but their majorities were typically thin and relatively short-lived, and the Democrats holding perhaps a slight overall advantage until the 1850s.

The market revolution's impact continued to accelerate in the 1830s, particularly as sheep continued to flood into the county in large volume, with many family farms adding a herd to their operation to make extra money selling it in the marketplace. As the county's agricultural sector became more closely linked to the market economy, and the Borough's local commercial importance grew, banking, tariffs, and transportation became central issues, become two key local foundations for the local Whig party. For nearly two decades, from Jackson's Bank War in the 1830s to the tariff battles in the 1840s, local Democrats and Whigs sparred over these and related national issues, relentlessly pleading their cases and denouncing their opposites at their public events and in the local newspapers. An 1846 letter from merchant Hugh Patterson in rural northern Washington County to John Hoge Ewing noted that "most of the Democrats here profess themselves to be great tariff men," demonstrating the need to be cautious when generalizing about political opinions at the local level; men who considered themselves loyal party members did not always agree with its official planks.¹¹⁴

Although there was strong factional and later partisan disagreement on important national economic policy issues and their implications, Washington's general political culture idolized republican principles and sought to actively protect, defend, and perpetuate them. As in countless other places, Washington's republican values were reflected in public events and organizations. For example, public meetings in the early and middle nineteenth century followed the same patterns reflecting republican ideology, emphasizing the rule of law and democratic

¹¹⁴ Hugh Patterson to John Hoge Ewing, July 30, 1846, John H. Ewing Papers, vii-j-73, HAMWJC; Beers, 326.

participation among members. Public meetings followed an interesting blend of aristocratic leadership and democratic participation and validation. The same roster of local luminaries supplied the chairmen and presidents, resolutions committees, and recording and corresponding secretaries to conduct and lead formal business, and one or more town fathers would make special remarks or a short speech appropriate to the occasion. On the democratic side, the floor was opened to comments from the rank and file audience, and the executive board's resolutions were formally adopted by popular vote. These values and practices were so pervasive in public organization that even non-political voluntary organizations followed similar patterns, even writing formal constitutions to bring added order. For example, both the Agricultural Society and Moral Society had written constitutions that specifically spelled out the organization's purpose, officers' powers, members' rights and duties, election procedures, and other organizational matters. The same basic formula that defined non-partisan town meetings also shaped local political meetings.

As the Second Party System took form in the 1830s, Washington hosted political assemblies and rallies at every election cycle, with partisans gathering at the court house or some other suitable venue to proclaim their platform, select delegates to state conventions, and prepare committees of vigilance to rouse the faithful to cast their ballots on election day. For example, an 1834 Democratic meeting held in Washington Borough proudly boasted of the largest attendance yet at a county convention and calling upon the support of all men "opposed to Tyranny, Usurpation, and Proscription in any form," and predicting a heavy majority in the fall elections. The wording in the first adopted resolution again makes it clear that ultimate approval for the party's candidates rests with the rank and file voter, saying "we earnestly *recommend* the above nomination to the Democratic-Republican citizens of this county [and] for their

support....” Other resolutions focused heavily on the Bank of the United States as the single greatest threat to republican liberty, and committees of vigilance were formed to scour the county for support.¹¹⁵

By the early 1830s, Washington flirted with the Anti-Masonic Party, even electing Thomas M.T. McKennan to Congress under its banner in 1830 and 1832, before he won a third term in 1834 as an early Whig, the new party’s only successful Congressional candidate in Pennsylvania west of Harrisburg.¹¹⁶ Historian Harry Watson argues that the Anti-Masonic party could not sustain their initial surge to coordinate a solid approach to broader issues, consigning it to an early demise. The Bank War was, according to Watson, a decisive short term event that crystallized the Whig party in many places, and he roots the Second Two-Party System primarily in economic issues, and if this was true nationally, at was also the case in Washington, Pennsylvania.¹¹⁷ As the two parties crystallized nationally, the Whigs adopted core National Republican economic themes and drew their greatest support in states and regions where the market revolution was proceeding more rapidly, such as manufacturing and commercial centers, whereas the Democrats pulled a greater strength from less market-oriented regions, especially agrarians ones, and the unskilled laborers in towns and cities. Whigs tended to advocate more pro-development activist government policies to facilitate, protect, and nurture economic growth, including internal improvements, easier to obtain corporate charters, expansion of the banking system, and protective tariffs for fledgling American industries. Whigs also had a greater propensity to emphasize a harmony of all interests in society and frame their vision in messianic and religious terms. The Whig editor of the *Washington Reporter*, for example, in advocating a

¹¹⁵ *Washington Examiner*, August 30, 1834.

¹¹⁶ Wilkes University Elections Statistics Project, *US House of Representative Elections*, <http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/rep/indexrep.html>.

¹¹⁷ Harry L. Watson, *Liberty and Power: the Politics of Jacksonian America* (1990; rev. ed., New York: Hill and Wang, 2006), 171, 184-85.

railroad connection to Pittsburgh in 1853 noted that “we have great faith in the civilizing, humanizing, moralizing, and Christianizing influence of railroads....,” equating internal improvements with a millennial vision.¹¹⁸

Democrats naturally advocated opposite policies from the Whigs, arguing for a restrained government involvement and expressing open fear or contempt for corporate businesses, banks, and tariffs.¹¹⁹ In the 1834 congressional campaign, for example, the pro-Jackson *Examiner* relentlessly attacked incumbent Thomas M.T. McKennan for his pro-bank, and to a lesser extent, pro-tariff positions in the two previous sessions, painting him as a Federalist at heart and a shill for the banks.¹²⁰ Although Democrats had differing policy ideas than Whigs, it is not the case that local Democrats were entirely hostile to the market revolution itself, often accepting or even embracing commercial wool production and internal improvements, for example, and often becoming involved in temperance movements. As historian Daniel Feller observes, the Whig and Democrats “presented competing, yet overlapping, prescriptions for progress.”¹²¹ Daniel Walker Howe agrees, noting that Democrats and Whigs sometimes found common ground, as in mutual support for state-supported common schools.¹²²

In Washington County during the Second Party System era, national political issues revolved around economic themes more than anything else, only yielding significant ground to sectional issues in the 1850s. As a primarily rural area in a prolonged transition from a traditional agrarian society to a new market-oriented experience, the political balance was generally competitive. Despite an overall slight Democratic advantage between the early 1830s

¹¹⁸ *Washington Reporter*, July 13, 1853.

¹¹⁹ Watson, *Liberty and Power*, 236-237.

¹²⁰ *Washington Examiner*, October 6, 1832; Ibid, October 11, 1834.

¹²¹ Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise*, 189.

¹²² Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 16.

and mid 1850s, Washington County's Whigs were an effective local opposition party, sometimes polling majorities for a variety of state and local offices, as well as Congressional seats. Local Whigs staked their arguments overwhelmingly on economic issues, including a pro-banking position, but tariff protection was perhaps their most important card to play as the county's wool interests continued to rapidly expand. Despite their overtures to the county's wool producers, loyalty to Jackson and his legacy was a powerful counterweight to Whig appeals, leaving Democrats with a small overall majority. Indeed, during the thirty years before the Civil War, party strengths remained well-matched, with some elections decided by a mere handful of votes, adding to the intense competitive partisan spirit. Several congressional races in the 1850s produced incredibly close countywide totals, such as the 1850 race, in which the Democrat candidate won the county vote 3279 to 3216 over his Whig rival, and 1857, when the Republican candidate lost the county by a mere eight votes, 3799 to 3792.¹²³

Although Washington Borough usually returned Democratic majorities from the late 1830s into the Civil War years, it too sometimes went Whig for local, state, or Congressional elections, particularly if the Whig candidate was a trusted Borough citizen held in particularly high personal regard, like Thomas M.T. McKennan in the 1830s, one of the few anti-Jacksonian congressional candidates who could poll a majority in Washington Borough.¹²⁴ Fuller emphasizes that Democrats drew their heavy support from voters who feared their liberty at risk by aristocratic elites and excessive concentrations of power, and given Washington's ingrained suspicions of centralized power since the 1790s, it is not surprising that the Democrats maintained such strength as the town and county moved further into the market revolution and

¹²³ *Washington Examiner*, October 19, 1850; Ibid, October 21, 1858.

¹²⁴ *Washington Examiner*, November 6, 1830; Ibid, October 13, 1832; Ibid, October 18, 1834.

the developing capitalist economy.¹²⁵ The fact that most farmers and townsmen were small-scale producers doubtlessly fed into the belief that vigilance against aristocratic manipulations was absolutely necessary to maintain their independence and future prospects. Historian Daniel Walker Howe ranks the banking issue generally, and the Bank War in particular, as the single greatest conflict point sparking the Second Party System's formation. In Washington's case, banking was certainly a central issue in the 1830s, but wool's local economic importance makes it plausible to rank tariff policy as equal to banking as a predominant political issue by the 1830s, and when banking lost much of its explosive power in Washington County in the 1840s, the tariff continued to draw heavy debate in the local partisan newspapers. An 1844 *Reporter* editorial cried out for all Whigs to rally strong for the fall election or see their economic plans ruined in the next congressional session, arguing that if Whigs were to "hesitate or falter now...the mischief will be done –the die will be cast- the fate of the American System will be sealed for long years to come."¹²⁶

In addition to banking and tariffs, abolitionism became a local political controversy by the 1830s. The Western Abolition Society had been formed in Washington Borough in 1823, although it was apparently short-lived and not significant enough to attract much controversy. A second organization, the Washington Anti-Slavery Society, dedicated to slavery's complete eradication in the United States, formed in 1834 thanks to renewed efforts by a small but dedicated core of anti-slavery advocates, some prosperous and influential local citizens, banker Samuel Hazlett and physician Francis LeMoyne, who became an important figure in Pennsylvania's Liberty Party, running for Congress once and Pennsylvania governor twice under its banner in the 1840s. The local abolitionists were relatively small in number but active

¹²⁵ Feller, *Jacksonian Promise*, 188-189.

¹²⁶ *Washington Reporter*, September 2, 1843.

enough to spark intense debate in Washington County by the middle 1830s. Elected president of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1835, LeMoyne's strident efforts promoting abolitionism quickly made him one of the most controversial figures in the town and county. Anti-abolitionist meetings denounced the Anti-Slavery Society, and more direct action sometimes went beyond mere words. In 1836, an anti-abolitionist crowd hurled rocks, bricks, and other objects through the Cumberland Presbyterian church's windows during an abolitionist meeting, also threatening the guest speaker with bodily harm as he departed. Following this incident, a meeting chaired by the Borough's chief burgess and directed by several of the town's most influential men, including Judge Thomas H. Baird. Their formal resolutions denounced the violent attacks on the abolitionist meeting, but laid ultimate blame on the Anti-Slavery society for needlessly stirring anger and discord with their highly controversial public events, warning them to cease and desist immediately. This prompted a counter-meeting in the nearby village of West Middletown, where abolitionists angrily denounced all efforts to stifle free speech and pointing out that the mob which had attacked the Cumberland Presbyterian church were moral degenerates fully responsible for their own actions. Although abolitionism was never a mass movement in Washington, it demonstrated slavery's potential to overshadow other issues, including the predominant economic debates over tariffs, internal improvements, and banking.¹²⁷

Francis LeMoyne was intimately involved in the abolitionist movement and the Pennsylvania Liberty Party, but as a congressional and gubernatorial candidate in the 1840s, he failed to draw any significant support, even in his home county and town. In his 1840 congressional campaign, the last year that Washington County was its own district, LeMoyne garnered only 681 out of a total 10,546 votes, or 6.5%. LeMoyne's 1844 and 1847 Liberty Party gubernatorial campaigns fared even worse, attracting 0.8% and 0.6% of the statewide vote,

¹²⁷ Crumrine, 546-47.

respectively, although he polled slightly better in his home county, with 3.7% of the county total in 1844 and 3% in 1847. It is clear that despite abolitionism's ability to rile emotions, it was not a threat to the prevailing two-party system in the 1840s.¹²⁸ The local Free Soil Party that briefly emerged in the early 1850s also learned that single-issue parties were unable to achieve critical mass and gain permanency in Washington, Pennsylvania.

By the early 1850s, growing sectionalism was straining both major political parties, particularly the Whigs, who remained deeply divided on the slavery question. In the 1840s, the Texas annexation and the Mexican-American War's vast territorial acquisitions had ignited new sectional rivalries and the question of slavery's expansion. The Wilmot Proviso, the Free Soil Party, and the Liberty Party are all indicators that slavery and sectionalism were beginning to emerge as influential intertwined political factors. The so-called Compromise of 1850 failed to settle the slavery issue in the West, and the 1854 Kansas Nebraska Act pushed sectional tensions to new heights. By the mid-1850s, there was a widespread feeling in the Northern states that the existing political parties were no longer adequately protecting their constituents and fears of a Slave Power threat grew significantly. The party system's stability was severely weakened by the early 1850s by a spreading belief that the parties no longer acted as effective champions for their republican liberties, providing opportunities for new organizations to develop.¹²⁹ The small single-issue parties which unsuccessfully challenged the national parties in the 1840s and early 1850s were merely a harbinger to the system's breakdown later in the decade.

Severely strained by growing sectional issues, the Whigs began to crumble under the twin pressures of nativism and anti-slavery by the early 1850s. Northern Whig resistance to slavery's expansion in the territories alienated their southern counterparts, creating a sectional fissure

¹²⁸ Wilkes University Elections Statistics Project: Pennsylvania Election Statistics 1682-2006, Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Election Returns, <http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/gov/indexgov.html>.

¹²⁹ Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 151-52.

within the party, exacerbated by the Kansas-Nebraska issue. Even northern Whigs could not agree on how far to push the anti-slavery agenda and whether to reach out to Free Soilers. Other issues, including anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiment, and a growing resentment towards both major parties for their apparent elitism, privilege, and unresponsiveness to the public's interests, compounded the national Whig's difficulties.¹³⁰

As the national Whig Party collapsed in the mid-1850s, the local party crumbled with it, leaving only a small remnant by the 1855 off-year elections. In 1853, the Washington County Whig Convention, held at the county seat, optimistically declared their party to be "...as free from divisions, and as sound and whole at heart as it ever was....," and for the time being it seemed plausible, at least locally.¹³¹ In 1854, the American Party was still a virtual non-factor among Washington's electors, with only Whig and Democrat candidates competing for local offices, and Know Nothing candidates receiving paltry support from Washingtonians for state-level offices, including the governorship, canal commissioner, and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. Indeed, the local Whigs, perhaps buoyed by the backlash over the Kansas-Nebraska Act, enjoyed great success in the 1854 elections, turning in majorities for Congress, governor, both the county's state assembly seats, and most county offices. It is interesting that even Washington Borough, which had strong Democratic leanings, also gave the Whig congressional candidate a 54-46% victory over his Democrat rival, a pattern repeated in its vote for most offices.¹³²

But just a year later in the 1855 elections, Washington County's Whigs fractured, with most drifting to the Know-Nothings, and the splintered vote allowed local Democrats to nearly sweep the off-year elections. Although no major offices were at stake, the county's voting

¹³⁰ Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 836-37.

¹³¹ *Washington Reporter*, June 22, 1853.

¹³² *Washington Examiner*, October 31, 1854.

patterns still demonstrate a decided shift from 1854. In the county sheriff tally, for example, the Democrat candidate's 48.7% easily defeated the Know Nothings' 41.2%, Whig's 8.3%, and an abolitionist candidate's 1.7%. Other races, including state assembly seats and county offices, produced similar results. In the space of just a year, the county's Whigs had experienced a catastrophic split and their party's eclipse.¹³³ The Know Nothings never became a majority party in Washington County, mainly because they could not carry all Whigs to their banner, and the local Democrats remained essentially united. Moreover, the Know Nothings' focus on ethno-cultural issues could not capture lasting local loyalty, largely because nativism was not a major factor in Washington's politics, and the anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant emphasis was an insufficient basis to form a political party in Washington County. As a result, the local American Party faded relatively quickly.

The fact that economic issues were still important in Washington is reflected in a January 1855 editorial in the *Reporter*, charging that free trade has been ruinous to the nation's economic interests, particularly northern agriculture and manufacturing, and that the Tariff of 1846 had been an unmitigated disaster, a common complaint in Pennsylvania.¹³⁴ Another *Reporter* editorial a month later lambasted the pro-Democratic *Examiner* for its continued opposition to an expanded banking presence in the community.¹³⁵ These and other important economic issues were peripheral to the Know Nothing movement, and when the national Whig party collapsed, it is likely that most of Washington's ex-Whigs temporarily embraced the American Party more from the absence of any viable alternative than from genuine nativist concerns. Not all Whigs abandoned their party easily in 1855, with a core group refusing to cast their lot with the Know Nothings, as expressed by remaining Whig leaders in an open letter to their erstwhile comrades

¹³³ Ibid, October 20, 1855.

¹³⁴ Sellers, *Market Revolution in America*, 427.

¹³⁵ *Washington Reporter*, January 10, 1855; Ibid, February 7, 1855.

about an upcoming Whig convention in August. These die-hard Whigs refused to quietly disband their party in favor of the Americans. John Bausman, the once pro-Whig editor of the *Reporter*, disagreed with attempts to keep the Whig Party afloat, advising holdouts that the party's demise was a *fait accompli*, and that supporting the Know Nothings was a better alternative than splitting the vote and handing the elections to the Democrats, which is ultimately precisely what happened.¹³⁶

By early 1856, Washington County political activists were organizing multi-partisan meetings to coordinate opposition to the “common enemy, the Pierce Administration,” inviting ex-Whigs, Americans, Free-Soilers, and disaffected Democrats to join in common cause.¹³⁷ This anti-administration organization was short-lived, but it may have helped gather many would-be Republicans into a common halfway house. The new Republican Party, with its pledge to prevent slavery's expansion and a commitment to Whig-style economic policies, emerged relatively quickly as the Democrats' new main opponent in Washington County in 1856. Local Republicans drew their support from anti-slavery and economic-oriented issues, from specifics like protectionist tariffs to broad concepts, like free soil and free labor ideology. The county's few abolitionists also mostly migrated to the Republicans, but formed a distinct minority as they did elsewhere in the mid-Atlantic and free western states in the late 1850s. In his 1983 study of the Republican Party's origins in New York, historian Hendrik Booraem argues that anti-slavery was the primary issue behind the party's formation in the Empire State.¹³⁸ The Republican anti-slavery stance was likewise crucial in their quest for support across the North and the free West. Michael Holt points out that Republicans in Pittsburgh in 1856 made opposition to slavery's

¹³⁶ Ibid, August 1, 1855.

¹³⁷ *Washington Reporter*, March 26, 1856.

¹³⁸ Hendrik Booraem V, *The Formation of the Republican Party in New York: Politics and Conscience in the Antebellum North* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 9-10.

expansion their centerpiece issue, arguing that if it advanced in the western territories, it would choke off white men's future economic prospects, degrading northern men the same manner as in the South.¹³⁹ Similarly, Washington County's Republicans, although not generally abolitionist, did ally themselves with free labor and free soil ideology, particularly after the Kansas-Nebraska Act, opposing slavery's extension in the western territories. If slavery were to expand into the western territories, it would result in a long-term economic disadvantage to the free states, Pennsylvania included, they reasoned. Former Whigs were the largest single component group in the new party, and it is not surprising that Republican economic development policies were congruent with old Whig agendas, particularly a protective tariff and support for banking, which along with the slavery expansion issue, constituted an important aspect of the Republican agenda.

In 1858, Republican candidates swept the board in Washington County, winning majorities in every race except the 20th District congressional seat, which the county Democrats won by a mere eight votes.¹⁴⁰ In contrast to the county as a whole, Washington Borough's loyalty to the Democracy still persisted, with its electors giving Republican candidates a slim majority in only two local races and all the rest going to Democrats. These patterns persisted into 1859 and 1860, with Republican candidates mostly successful at the county level, but a minority in the county seat, which remained a Democrat stronghold, a pattern also reflected in the presidential election. Some townships across the county were also staunch Democrat districts, including most of the county's west-northwest corner, and others were overwhelmingly

¹³⁹ Michael F. Holt, *Forging a Majority: The Formation of the Republican Party in Pittsburgh, 1848-1860* (1969; repr., Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990), 191-92.

¹⁴⁰ *Washington Examiner*, October 21, 1858; In 1858, the Republicans officially ran under the banner of the People's Party; the 20th District, which included Washington, Greene, and Fayette counties, had overwhelming Democratic majorities in Fayette and Greene handily giving the Democrats their only Pennsylvania congressional seat west of the mountains and one of only three statewide, with 20 districts going Republican and two to the breakaway Anti-Lecompton Democrats.

Republican. It is important to note that although Republicans dominated county elections between 1858 and 1860, overall partisan strengths were still competitively balanced, and many individual boroughs and townships were heavily lop-sided in their political loyalties.

Finally, it is again important to note that local politics was not always defined by national issues. Indeed, as Michael Holt points out in his examination of the Republicans' rise in Pittsburgh, the controversy over taxation to pay for interest on municipal bonds that had been issued to subscribe in various railroad projects were an important partisan issue in the city's politics at the end of the 1850s.¹⁴¹ Similarly, a so-called railroad tax spurred political local political activism in between late 1858 and the secession crisis more than any national issue, although interestingly in Washington County the pro- and anti-tax forces were not defined by partisan battle lines.

Conclusion

The Market Revolution in Washington County and Borough between the 1810s and the Civil War may be more aptly described as an Evolution. Market forces undeniably expanded during this half century, and its influences, as well as reactions to it, were visible, including economic developmental corporations in transportation, agriculture, and manufactures, the rise of temperance movements, and the growing importance of economic issues in party politics. Boosted by transportation improvements, including both the National Road and local turnpike projects, commercial agriculture developed rapidly, providing the economic underpinning for the county economy. Commercial development proceeded throughout the time period, with banks and the cash/credit nexus expanding as modern markets replaced traditional bartering and other pre-market patterns. Without a rapid population boom and no significant large-scale industrial revolution, the town and county remained anchored in something still resembling their

¹⁴¹ Michael F. Holt, *Forging a Majority*, 221.

republican ideal of a community defined by landowning farmers, self-employed craftsmen, and small merchants, all with a theoretically equal standing in society, bound by its standards of social conduct, and expecting some upward mobility as the reward for dedicated hard work. The market revolution's immediate impact was far less dramatic in Washington Borough and its hinterlands than in boom towns further west and on the Great Lakes, where population growth came so quickly and modern capitalism and industry expanded so rapidly that significant social tensions were felt immediately and deeply. Despite the embryonic presence of a new wage-labor force in Washington Borough by mid-century and the Civil War, they were not yet a true working class, and traditional social patterns were not seriously disrupted even in the late 1850s.

One of the market revolution's most important developments for Washington Borough and the larger county before the Civil War was the railroad issue. The first railroad proposals were publicly aired in 1830, but it was not until the middle and late 1840s that this latest phase in the ongoing transportation revolution became a sustained and central local issue. The railroad question ultimately became as important in the 1850s as the banking and tariff debates had been in the 1830s and 1840s; indeed, railroad-related issues were perhaps more dominant in local politics in the 1850s than national issues.

Chapter 5: Reluctant Embrace: Washington and the Railroad Question, 1828-1861

In the latter half of the 1840's, Washington, Pennsylvania, faced a growing threat to a major source of prosperity, the National Road. Running directly through the town and cutting an east-west path across the entire county, the National Road had benefited Washington for a quarter century by directing a steady flow of westward-headed settlers through the center of town. These settlers, who purchased a plethora of goods and services, made excellent customers for Washington merchants and tradesmen, and moreover, the National Road gave local transportation a great boost, making east-west travel within Washington County and its neighbors faster and cheaper. With the National Road cutting directly through Washington Borough, its economy enjoyed a lucrative business with westward moving settlers, with a variety of hardware and dry goods stores, saddlers, wheelwrights, several wagon and carriage shops, groceries, hotels, and liverys cropping up to provide whatever goods and services they might need. These same businesses naturally did a brisk business with the townspeople and surrounding countryside as well, but the National Road's steady stream of customers was an ongoing source of valuable income.

The National Road was itself a product of the nascent Market Revolution, of which transportation improvements were a crucial hallmark. For its time, it represented a major improvement in internal transportation, but after more than two relatively lucrative decades for Washington, the National Road's economic importance was now threatened by that same revolution's technological acceleration, coming in the form of steamboats and railroads. By the mid-1840s, thanks to navigational improvements on the Monongahela River, many settlers exited the National Road at the river, where they boarded steamboats to the Ohio River and the West. But Washington's National Road-based prosperity faced an even more menacing threat in

the form of railroads, for at the end of the 1840's, the die was cast: the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was constructing a line to the Ohio River at Wheeling, Virginia, and the Pennsylvania Railroad was in the process of linking the state from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. When these projects were completed, Washington Borough, its citizens feared, would be cut off from the main commercial and travel routes, thus ending a lucrative source of income and leaving Washington a stagnant backwater. Economic historian John Majewski notes that communities and cities across the country turned to developmental corporations to facilitate their transportation improvements since the early republic. These usually local or regional corporate entities were not built primarily for financial profit but to enhance commercial access and land values. Majewski sees these corporations as an important transition element from traditional economic patterns to the new capitalist market-driven system, relying on kinship, personal connections, local reputations, and trust to gain the public legitimacy necessary to carry out their improvements. Although developmental corporations were more closely associated with modest-sized and localized or sub-regional projects, like bridge companies, turnpikes, and plank roads, early small-scale railroads still retained many of their essential characteristics, including a heavy reliance on local boosters and investors, and the expectation of indirect benefits more than financial profits.¹ Any internal improvement venture, regardless of classification, needed sufficient community support, or it could never successfully evolve from conception to operation.

Stillborn Railroad Projects, 1830-1849

Washingtonians began flirting with railroads soon after the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad received a right-of-way in 1828 from the Pennsylvania legislature to make Pittsburgh its

¹ John Majewski, *A House Dividing: Economic Development in Pennsylvania and Virginia Before the Civil War* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 57-58.

terminus at the Ohio River, with the stipulation that it be completed by 1837. Several Washington entrepreneurs and businessmen, in conjunction with their counterparts in the north-central part of the county where the envisaged railroad would run, began holding public meetings to discuss and promote the project. The first public meeting was held on December 27, 1830, at the county courthouse, where the railroad boosters passed several resolutions justifying the project, citing that Washington Borough would be the closest access point from the B&O railhead in Pittsburgh to the National Road, that commercial interests of not only Washington, but Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and others, would be enhanced, and that the Chartiers Creek valley offered a natural and relatively easy route. Thomas H. Baird, a Washington entrepreneur and attorney, then serving as a circuit court judge, paid surveyor Charles DeHass to examine the possible routes and make a comprehensive report complete with cost estimates.² Washington *Examiner* editor John Grayson, a staunch Democrat, editorialized favorably about the railroad idea, arguing that there were sufficient local resources to fund the project and it would only take the leadership of a handful of enterprising men to bring the project to fruition. Grayson also complained about the “present depressed state of our trade,” before offering the belief that deliberate and swift action in creating a railroad link to Pittsburgh would reverse the situation, adding optimistically that there is “no reason why our beautiful town may not yet be a great and flourishing place.”³ A letter to the editor under the pseudonym “Free Trade and Farmers’ Rights” appeared in the January 22, 1831 *Examiner*, complaining about Pittsburgh’s apparent lack of interest in the proposed railroad, arguing that its great benefits to them should be obvious, as it would facilitate a significant increase in Washington County’s agricultural and mineral exports their city and the export of a variety of goods in return. “Does not [Pittsburgh] feel for

² Earle J. Forrest, *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania*, 3 Vols. (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1926) I, 788; *Washington Examiner*, January 1, 1831.

³ *Washington Examiner*, January 1, 1831.

the welfare and convenience of those who supply her with bread, and beef, and butter, and pork – and buy her merchandise in return?,” he asked. The author also argued that the project would be financially profitable and would contribute significantly to an increased Western trade.⁴ Grayson continued to vigorously support the railroad link with Pittsburgh in his newspaper into the spring, as in a March 26, 1831 editorial in which he expressed great pride in Washington County’s “fertile soil and rich mineral resources..., but when we see our enterprise and our resources cramped and rendered comparatively useless only for the want of ready and easy facilities to good markets, surely it ought to enlist at least the favorable opinion of all our citizens.”⁵ Grayson’s editorials spoke the market revolution’s language of enhanced trade and economic development through internal improvements, but at this point he and other railroad boosters were ahead of their time in terms of being able to garner public support.

Further evidence that at least some influential Washington Borough businessmen were intrigued by the railroad’s potential benefits is provided by a letter from Mary Wilson Acheson to her son, Alexander Wilson Acheson, regarding the proposed railway. Wife of prominent merchant David Acheson, Mary Acheson explained that the couple had been considering a move to Maysville, Kentucky, on the Ohio River, to establish a commission house, but “he says that if they can go on with this railroad here, that a business of that kind here would yield employment for you all. They are now surveying the road and really there seems to be a good deal of stir among the people respecting it.”⁶ The stir was enough to obtain a charter, but insufficient to bring the railroad to life.

⁴ *Washington Examiner*, January 22, 1831.

⁵ *Ibid*, March 26, 1831.

⁶ Mary Wilson Acheson to Alexander Wilson Acheson, ed. Jane Fulcher, *Family Letters in a Civil War Century: Achesons, Wilsons, Brownsons, Wisharts, and Others of Washington, Pennsylvania* (Avella, PA: Privately published, 1986), 36.

Pennsylvania chartered the Washington and Pittsburgh Railroad (WPRR) on March 18, 1831, and less than two weeks later, Charles DeHass issued his detailed 36-page report which estimated the costs of several prospective routes from Washington Borough north along the Chartiers Creek, passing through Canonsburg, and then on to Pittsburgh, where it was to terminate on the south side of the city's Monongahela Bridge, a distance of just over 34 miles. DeHass boldly predicted manageable construction costs, optimistically (and naively) presumed investment from virtually all the adjacent farms and businesses, and estimated a generous nine percent return to investors could be achieved in a short time. Despite the report's rosy scenario and the hopes of businessmen like David Acheson, subscriptions to company stock were not forthcoming in any significant amount. The WPRR's boosters met not only public apathy, but widespread hostility toward their project, which was mostly rooted in the fear that the railroad would seriously damage the region's road traffic and prosperity of those who serviced the stream of migrant settlers, from hoteliers to hostlers, drovers to dry goods merchants. Pleas to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad for financial assistance were also rejected, and the WPRR never progressed beyond the planning stage before its charter expired. Subsequent charters were granted in 1837 and 1846, but met the same fate as the original company.⁷

By the late 1840s there was also some talk of a more modest railroad project, which would run the seven miles between Washington and Canonsburg, its neighbor to the northeast, and make the intervening coal mines more easily accessible to both boroughs. The *Washington Reporter* opined favorably on the idea, arguing that the relative ease of construction between the two towns and projecting that the coal trade volume alone should make it a profitable venture. Furthermore, it claimed, the reduced transportation costs would benefit consumers with lower

⁷ Earle J. Forrest, *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania*, I, 786-787; Charles DeHass, "Chartiers Railroad Report of a Survey of a Railroad from Washington to Pittsburg," March 30, 1830, 35-36, MG-286, 286m.642, Pennsylvania State Archives (hereafter PSA), Harrisburg, PA.

prices and stimulate greater demand. But calls to seek a state charter were never fulfilled, and the Washington and Canonsburg coal railroad idea never made it beyond vague proposals. Many people remained indifferent or hostile to any railroad, while those favoring the coal-hauling railroad were divided between a railroad and a cheaper plank road. A letter to the editor in the February 21, 1849 *Reporter*, for example, argued that a plank road to facilitate local coal transportation was a superior alternative to any railroad venture, for it would be cheap, would still reduce transportation costs, and would undoubtedly be profitable.⁸

These early forays into railroad construction, despite their failures, indicate the market revolution's growing presence and impact on Washington's economic players and their strategic thinking. Although some local entrepreneurs and businessmen already sensed the future importance of railroads, a far greater number were apparently indifferent or opposed to them. As the WPRR case demonstrates, even amidst the first signs that significant new transportation improvements were coming soon, people were highly defensive about their existing road connections and the steady business they generated. The National Road's importance to Washington Borough's economy, although impossible to quantify, was substantial, and railroads were ultimately seen as a threat to it throughout the 1830s and 1840s. It is important to note that anti-railroad sentiment did not necessarily equate to opposition to the market revolution itself; indeed, the National Road had given Washington significant first-hand experience with the potential benefits of internal improvements, and the county had relied on exports to, and imports from, distant markets since its frontier period. Significant numbers of anti-railroaders took their position because they were clinging to established and proven transportation improvements, or they did not believe a railroad project was feasible, sustainable, or be profitable.

⁸ *Washington Reporter*, January 24, 1849; Ibid, January 31, 1849; Ibid, February 21, 1849.

Because of their growing economic implications and inexorable expansion toward the Upper Ohio Valley, railroads became a central and enduring local political issue from the mid-1840s until the secession crisis. Faced by the late 1840s with the *fait accompli* of the National Road's impending economic ruination by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, Washington County became heavily involved in two major railroad projects in the 1850's. The Hempfield Railroad, chartered in Pennsylvania and Virginia in 1850 and 1851, respectively, was to stretch from Wheeling, Virginia, to Washington, Pennsylvania, and then on to Greensburg, where it was to link with the Pennsylvania Railroad east of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh business interests opposed the Hempfield, but after failed attempts to prevent its construction, the Pittsburgh-to-Washington railroad idea was resurrected and finally chartered in 1853 as the Chartiers Valley Railroad. In both cases, the reality of railroad construction proved to be far more difficult than most Washingtonians initially believed. The Chartiers Valley Railroad faced a tenuous financial situation from its inception, and it was never able to overcome this obstacle, abandoning construction in 1856, and not resuming work until 1870, when the Pennsylvania Railroad agreed to take the lead in its completion. Shaky finances likewise burdened the Hempfield throughout its existence, and it fared only slightly better than the CVRR. Financial difficulties forced the Hempfield to suspend construction on the Washington-Greensburg section, but it completed the Wheeling-Washington portion in 1857. The truncated Hempfield Railroad was barely able to stay afloat, let alone resume construction efforts.

Playing the Railroad Game: Partisan Politics Subdued

The prevailing local political partisanship that animated debate on national policy issues was decisively subordinated to perceptions of community interest when it came to railroads, whether one favored or opposed them. Railroad boosters in particular discarded traditional

sentiments like state loyalty to Pennsylvania, and a long sense of cooperation and friendship with Pittsburgh, in their quest to keep Washington on the major transportation lines. To protect its perceived community interests, Washington aligned itself in 1850 with Pittsburgh's biggest regional rival, the city of Wheeling, Virginia, in order to snare a direct railroad connection, much to the ire and distress of their neighbors in the Iron City. Neither partisan loyalties nor state pride influenced Washington's desire for a railroad connection; the growing market revolution was accelerating, and fearing that they faced economic perdition if they failed to act, Washington was willing to explore any avenue to achieve its railroad connection. As a small player on a large stage, Washington attempted to steer between her larger neighbors, capitalize on their rivalries, and offer cooperation to anyone willing to work with them. It was naked self-interest at best, double-dealing at worst.

As a political issue, railroad construction showed that it could both unite and divide the county at different times, and it cut across party lines, making temporary allies out of traditional adversaries. In advocating connections to Wheeling and/or Pittsburgh, Washington's railroad boosters believed they were rescuing the borough and the county from economic marginalization and stagnation, and they garnered widespread local support in the early 1850s, a marked difference from twenty years earlier.

By the 1830s in Washington County as elsewhere, party politics were an important dividing line on major national policy issues, such as the tariff or slavery's status in the Western territories, but bipartisan cooperation was common on issues that dealt with local social and economic issues with community-wide implication. For example, the temperance crusade which swept much of the country in the 1840's and 1850's was for a time one of the most pressing political issues in Washington County, and it cut across the political spectrum, drawing support

and opposition from adherents to various parties. According to the Washington temperance advocates, the community's very survival was at stake, and the crusaders set aside political partisanship for this issue. The 1854 general election ballot allowed Pennsylvania voters to register their favor or opposition to the idea of statewide prohibition, and Washington County went heavily in favor of the alcohol ban by a vote of 4276 to 2672.⁹ Given the tight electoral balance between Democrats and Whigs across the county in that era generally and that year in particular, the Prohibition vote indicates that the temperance cause had at least some bipartisan support and opposition, since neither party could claim anything close to 62 percent of the county electorate. Similarly, neither party was unanimous in its position of internal improvements, including the ultimate question, railroads, which drew both bipartisan support and opposition across Washington County and in the Borough. Washingtonians had overwhelmingly opposed the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad's earliest plans of to make Pittsburgh its railhead on the Ohio River because they feared it would devastate the National Road's economic vitality and bring direct adverse impacts to the substantial number of merchants, small manufacturers, tradesmen, innkeepers, and others who depended on that traffic. Likewise, the 1831 WPRR and its re-chartered successors all failed because of widespread antipathy or opposition.¹⁰

Early opposition in Washington to the B & O's right of way into southwestern Pennsylvania was rooted in perceptions of the community's economic self-interest rather than political partisanship. Washington County elites of both parties could be found on both sides of the issue. For example, the Canonsburg Democrat William Calohan cooperated extensively with John Hoge Ewing and John Bausman, both Whigs from Washington Borough, on the 1850s effort to revive the WPRR. It is also revealing that Washington's pro-Democrat newspaper

⁹ *Washington Examiner*, October 31, 1854.

¹⁰ Boyd Crumrine, *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania, With Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1882), 393-394.

Examiner and the Whig/Republican *Reporter*, who engaged in virtual non-stop rhetorical warfare on most national issues, were in virtually complete agreement on the need for railroad connections to Washington. Conversely, the well respected Washington Borough physician and Democrat John Wishart, Sr. was not a railroad enthusiast, nor was the Borough's abolitionist and anti-Democrat physician and land speculator Francis Julius LeMoyne, at least insofar as public subscriptions were concerned.¹¹

In the early 1840s, Washington County still clung to the National Road, and most people remained skeptical of local involvement in railroad projects, although not always hostile to such projects in nearby cities. An 1843 *Reporter* editorial explained that a railroad to Pittsburgh was no reason for jealousy or ill-will, for every city has a right to pursue the internal improvements that will benefit it. But at the same time, the *Reporter* cautioned against Washington's involvement in railroads, expressing what was apparently the confident majority opinion that "the [National] Road is the great National artery through which a living stream must ever flow, unchecked and continually augmenting. It is to our Republic what the Appian Way was to the Romans." The editor concluded by arguing that no adjacent railroad could possibly siphon off enough traffic to do any harm to Washington's interests.¹² By the middle and late 1840s, major railroads were spreading into the region, whether Washingtonians approved of it or not, and their place on the main East-West transportation route was apparently coming to an end. The Pennsylvania Railroad pushed westward towards Pittsburgh via the so-called Central Route, and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad planned to extend its line to some point on the Ohio River, whether Pittsburgh, Wheeling, or Parkersburg, Virginia. Washingtonians feared, with good reason, that these railroads would make the National Road obsolete as a major conveyor of goods

¹¹ *Washington Reporter*, January 4, 1854.

¹² *Ibid*, April 29, 1843.

and settlers, so the question turned to how best to minimize the damage. By 1849, Washingtonians had come believe that since a railroad to the Ohio River was inevitable, then at least it should be built to Pittsburgh, and a majority accordingly threw its support to its northern neighbor's bid for the B&O railhead.

In 1828, the Pennsylvania legislature had granted the B & O a charter to extend its railroad to Pittsburgh, but with a fifteen year time limit. When the deadline expired in 1843, the charter's renewal was not by any means guaranteed. As negotiations over a possible new charter dragged on, Philadelphia capitalists became convinced that the Baltimore & Ohio would interfere with its own railroad plans. Chartered in 1846, the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) was determined to construct a continuous line to Pittsburgh, where it would be in a commanding position to dominate trade with the greater West.¹³ As the PRR pushed forward with its Central Route towards Pittsburgh, Philadelphia's business interests saw the B&O's plan to make the Iron City its own juncture with the Ohio River as a direct threat to the PRR's profitability and Philadelphia's wider economic expansion. With Philadelphia and eastern Pennsylvania interests controlling the PRR and dominating the state legislature, Philadelphia took a leading role in organizing an opposition to the B&O's charter renewal. Philadelphia and Baltimore were already economic rivals, not just for access to the West, but even in southern Pennsylvania, where Philadelphia saw part of its hinterland forming increased economic ties to Baltimore, and the railroad question exacerbated their competition and raised the stakes involved.¹⁴

A brief look at Washington's stance on the issue of granting a new charter with the right-of-way to the B & O through southwest Pennsylvania to Pittsburgh illustrates several key points

¹³ William Kenneth Schusler, "Railroads Come to Pittsburgh," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 1960, 254.

¹⁴ John Majewski, *A House Dividing*, 75; John Majewski, "The Political Impact of Great Commercial Cities," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Summer 1997), 5.

about Washington's mindset concerning the impending transition into the railroad age. First, the shift to favor, or at least accept, the idea of a nearby railroad despite the inevitable diversion of trade from the National Road was not a partisan issue. Instead, the railroad question presented both vulnerability and opportunity to the community as a whole, and party politics played a marginal role as citizens faced collective choices that transcended partisan affiliation. Second, there was a direct appeal to Pennsylvania state pride as a reason to support the proposed right-of-way to Pittsburgh over its rival out-of-state candidates, showing that traditional loyalties were still a part of community thinking in the late 1840s. Third, alongside the appeal to general state pride, there were explicit indications of growing East-West sectional tensions within Pennsylvania associated with the market revolution's advance.

On March 23, 1846, a large public meeting assembled at the Washington County courthouse to ascertain local opinion on the B&O right-of-way, with John Bausman of the pro-Whig *Reporter* noting its nonpartisan tone and near-unanimous sense of direction. "The meeting had no political characteristics—it was composed of all parties," he wrote. "There is comparatively little diversity of opinion on this subject in our community. A large majority of our citizens zealously advocate the grant of liberty to the Baltimore and Ohio Rail Road to carry this improvement to Pittsburgh," he added. The participants feared that if the Pennsylvania Legislature did not act quickly in granting the right of way, the railroad's Ohio River connection would be made in Virginia, probably somewhere downriver of Wheeling. In this case, all of southwestern Pennsylvania would be adversely affected by the loss of commerce and trade. The meeting's Resolutions Committee drafted a preamble illustrating Washington's defensive posture and Pennsylvania loyalties, stating "to protect our own interests is both our right and our duty—hence we meet...to deliberate upon the best plan of protecting those rights...not only of

this county, but also of the city of Pittsburgh and the whole interests of Western Pennsylvania.”¹⁵ The meeting’s formal resolutions acknowledged that Washington would likely see a reduction in its National Road business regardless of where the B & O line reached the Ohio River, but it would lose the least if Pittsburgh were the terminus. In addition, an appeal was also made to the emotional factor of state pride; Pennsylvanians could not stand by and allow its trade routes to be usurped by Virginia.¹⁶ Again defending the B&O’s right-of-way to Pittsburgh in April 1846, the *Reporter* opined, “we believe in supporting Pittsburgh, our great Western Market, and Washington County and its interests, against the local partialities of anywhere else,” adding that, “if we must in some degree lose the benefit of the great [National Road], let us secure the next greatest advantage to us and a much greater advantage to Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania...”¹⁷

In an open letter to the citizenry published in the April 25, 1846 *Reporter*, Washington County’s two members of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Democrats Richard Donaldson and Daniel Rider, explicitly underscored both the nonpartisan nature of the issue and their own concern for the commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s general well-being. “The right of way is not...intended to benefit either Democrats or Whigs exclusively, but the whole people,” they said in describing the basis for their support for the right of way. “It is intended to avert from our whole State...a great calamity – the extension of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad to the Ohio River at Wheeling or some lower point.”¹⁸

But Pennsylvania as a whole was actually divided on the right of way issue. Historians frequently note the growing East-West sectional tension in antebellum Virginia, but similar East-West tensions existed within Pennsylvania, with Philadelphia and Pittsburgh the standard-bearers

¹⁵ *Washington Reporter*, April 4, 1846.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, April 11, 1846.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, April 25, 1846.

for their respective parts of the Commonwealth. To be sure, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia businessmen and investors had developed extensive commercial and mercantile ties since the late 1700s and had previously cooperated on internal improvement projects, including a turnpike road that connected the cities by the late 1810s, the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal in the late 1820s, and later the Pennsylvania Railroad, which was completed to Pittsburgh in 1852.¹⁹ But despite already extensive cooperation between them, capitalists in the two cities saw the B&O right-of-way issue quite differently, resulting in a bitter dispute in both the state government and the press. Philadelphia's investor class stood bitterly opposed to a right-of-way for a Pittsburgh terminus on the grounds that it would damage the Pennsylvania Railroad by diverting a large portion of Western trade. Conversely, Pittsburgh's railroad boosters saw the B&O terminus as an important step in the Iron City's quest to secure commercial and manufacturing dominance in the Upper Ohio Valley and its rise to full municipal maturity, and they clearly saw the advantages in amassing as many railroad connections as possible.²⁰

By the 1840s, Pittsburgh had also been engaged in a long and ongoing rivalry with Wheeling, Virginia, for economic supremacy in the Upper Ohio Valley region. Although Pittsburgh had rather swiftly risen to regional economic predominance after 1800, Wheeling's entrepreneurs and capitalists proved to be dogged competitors, skillfully exploiting their city's geographic advantage of being downriver from Pittsburgh and at a point on the Ohio River where low water navigation was, compared to the waters upriver, rarely impeded by the seasonal rhythms. The first significant clash between Wheeling and Pittsburgh was fought over the National Road's route, with the former city ultimately chosen in 1816 as the Road's crossing

¹⁹ L. Diane Barnes, "Urban Rivalry in the Upper Ohio Valley: Wheeling and Pittsburgh in the Nineteenth Century," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* (Vol. 123, No. 3., July 1999), 217-18; Schusler, "Railroads Come to Pittsburgh," 255.

²⁰ *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, April 13, 1853.

point at the Ohio River because of its navigational advantage, much to Pittsburghers' chagrin.²¹ By the late 1840s, Wheeling and Pittsburgh were again locked in battle, this time over the Wheeling Bridge, which Pittsburgh businessmen accused of obstructing river navigation to the detriment of their city's commercial interests. Designed by engineer Charles Ellet, Jr., a pioneer in suspension bridge designs, the Wheeling Bridge was completed in 1849, prompting the commonwealth of Pennsylvania to immediately act on a panicky Pittsburgh's behalf by filing suit against the Wheeling Belmont Bridge Company in the United States Supreme Court, although the case lingered until 1852.²²

It was into this highly charged atmosphere of municipal rivalries that the most serious attempt at railroad construction in Washington, Pennsylvania, finally began in the 1840s. John Majewski notes that urban commercial considerations could cement alliances on internal improvement projects, whether between distant cities or within or between regions.²³ Similarly, commercial interests could spark bitter rivalries and competition, particularly between contestants in close geographic proximity, like Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Wheeling, Virginia. In antebellum economic development, as historian Carl Abbott argues, local considerations were foremost in every community, with regional, state, and national considerations taking progressively lower priority.²⁴ As a small voice in a discordant choir of giants, a majority in Washington believed their best short-run option was to support Pittsburgh's position over Philadelphia's regarding the B & O Railroad's right of way to the Iron City. Again, this was an attempt to minimize economic losses by choosing the lesser of evils.

²¹ L. Diane Barnes, "Urban Rivalry in the Upper Ohio Valley," 210-13.

²² Ibid, 223-24.

²³ Majewski, "Political Impact of the Great Commercial Cities," 17.

²⁴ Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 121.

Washington's pro-right-of-way majority formed from a defensive posture rather than a proactive consensus to bring railroads to southwestern Pennsylvania.

Fearing that the county faced permanent stagnation and perhaps economic ruin without the B&O rail terminus in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia's opposition to it exacerbated intra-Pennsylvania sectionalism in Washington County and boosted locals' self-image as *western* Pennsylvanians. Indeed, the Washington County citizens' meeting and the 1846 open letter from Donaldson and Rider both emphasized the protection of *western* Pennsylvania even more stridently than for the state as a whole. Moreover, Donaldson and Rider specifically fingered Philadelphians as the "most bitter opponents of this liberal and glorious scheme of beneficence."²⁵ Complaining that Western Pennsylvania was frequently treated as a step-child, and showing an open contempt for Philadelphia's domination of state government, they charged that "these...leading opponents of the...right of way...have never brought anything but disaster and disgrace upon our glorious Commonwealth."²⁶ They concluded by accusing Philadelphia's wealthy business and political leaders of disregarding the economic well-being of the less developed and more vulnerable western portion of the state in favor of adding to eastern Pennsylvania's already vast wealth. Again, political parties played a subordinate role to regional economic considerations and identity. Donaldson and Rider's blanket-condemnation of state political leaders from the greater Philadelphia bore no overtly partisan overtones. Indeed, most of Philadelphia's representatives in the state legislature were Democrats like Donaldson and Rider.²⁷

Washington's late-1840s majority favoring the B & O's right-of-way to Pittsburgh represents an acknowledgement that the National Road's eclipse was imminent regardless of

²⁵ *Washington Reporter*, April 25, 1846.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

their local interest to the contrary, and their support for the Pittsburgh link was an attempt at damage control. Considering that Wheeling, Virginia, was for all practical purposes no further or less convenient in terms of travel, Washington's support for Pittsburgh can be interpreted as an instinctive sense of loyalty to fellow Pennsylvanians. In addition, Philadelphia's opposition to this damage control effort kindled a sense of the East-West intra-Pennsylvania rivalry that had already been growing in and around Pittsburgh.²⁸ Political party affiliation was almost irrelevant on the paramount issue of salvaging Washington's future prospects for growth and prosperity. A majority of Washington's political leaders, Democrats and Whigs alike, both in the borough and wider county, aligned themselves according to their perception of the future collective prosperity and viability, which soon meant taking the community into the railroad game.

As 1850 approached, nearby railroads were a *fait accompli*, whether in Wheeling or Pittsburgh, or both, and it was increasingly apparent to Washington's entrepreneurial class, and perhaps the public at large, that a local railroad was needed to avoid falling completely off the main transportation routes. Washington embraced railroading ventures from a defensive standpoint, and only when it became clear that the National Road's future would not be as lucrative as its past. Interestingly, it was a web of cutthroat rivalries involving Pittsburgh, Wheeling and Philadelphia that gave Washington a fresh opportunity to secure a railroad link directly through their town and across the county. With her economic future seemingly at stake, Washington County was now willing to work with anyone who could help them avoid the dreaded stagnation that was expected to follow the opening of the B & O. With the WPRR still moribund and without any apparent chance of revival, Washington was forced to look elsewhere for partners. When the opportunity to work with Wheeling on a railroad that would bisect the

²⁸ Catherine Elizabeth Reiser, *Pittsburgh's Commercial Development, 1800-1850* (Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1951), 149-51.

county and pass through Washington Borough appeared at the end of the 1840's, Washington's elites continued to subordinate their partisan rivalries to shared perception of railroads as vital to the whole community's self-interest. Further, they were willing to abandon any traditional loyalty to fellow Pennsylvanians and endure Pittsburgh's ire and outrage as they began to forge ahead on an independent railroad project with their Dominion State neighbors in Wheeling.

Pittsburgh Rejected, Wheeling Embraced

The Baltimore & Ohio ultimately made its Ohio River railhead at Wheeling, Virginia, to the disappointment and consternation of Pittsburgh boosters. As historian L. Diane Barnes notes, "interests in the sparring cities understood the...railroad not as the end of their rivalry, but as a new dimension to be incorporated in the battle...."²⁹ Hoping to recover themselves and beat the B & O Railroad in securing the lion's share of the Western trade, and perhaps still smarting from Philadelphia's part in preventing the B & O from obtaining a right-of-way into Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh investors concentrated their money and energies towards a western railway connection through the state of Ohio, principally through the planned Pittsburgh & Steubenville Railroad and the Ohio & Pennsylvania Railroad. "Our market is in the West," the Pittsburgh *Gazette* flatly declared on December 4, 1849. "The western people are almost our sole customers, and our chief competitors are found in that market and from the Eastern cities. Our interest therefore is...to open up rapid and cheap communications with our western neighbors."³⁰ The *Gazette* also maintained that the Pennsylvania Railroad's Central Route, although having marginal importance to Pittsburgh, was primarily being built for Philadelphia's benefit, as Pittsburgh should not expect to gain many customers from the established Eastern markets. The

²⁹ L. Diane Barnes, "Urban Rivalry on the Upper Ohio," 222.

³⁰ *Pittsburgh Gazette*, December 4, 1849.

one million dollars already subscribed to that road by Pittsburgh was commensurate with the Iron City's secondary interest in it, the *Gazette* editorialized, and Pittsburgh capital should now be turned to the city's links to the rapidly growing West.³¹ The *Gazette*'s editorial again reveals the perception in Pittsburgh that her interests were now diverging from Philadelphia's. From Pittsburgh's perspective, the *Gazette* editor argued, construction of a Western link was vital to compete with the encroaching B & O Railroad, which presented a direct challenge to Pittsburgh's status as the dominant commercial and manufacturing center in the Upper Ohio Valley. "We can no longer compete...on equal terms in the valley of the Ohio. We must stretch our iron arms beyond her, and compete for the trade of the West not on the river, but in the towns and villages, and at the doors of the farmers of the interior," the *Gazette* argued.³²

As Pittsburgh's attention and capital fixated on the Western horizon, Philadelphians shouldered most of the Pennsylvania Central Route's financial burdens as construction inched westward towards Pittsburgh. Without significant new assistance from Pittsburgh, tensions began to escalate between the two cities' investor class over the railroad's costs. Meanwhile, with the B & O line on its way to Wheeling, that city's elites were searching for ways to quickly outmaneuver Pittsburgh again in order to make further inroads on their longtime commercial adversary. A second link to a major railroad might give Wheeling a clear strategic opportunity to establish itself as the leading transportation, commercial, and perhaps manufacturing hub in the Upper Ohio Valley. While their two larger neighbors forged ahead with their extensive railroad projects, Washingtonians were growing anxious about their prospects once these lines were completed. The National Road had brought a steady stream of passing customers, and businessmen all along its route had grown accustomed to the lucrative trade that they provided;

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

the new railroads threatened to disrupt this income source. *Washington Reporter* editor John Bausman complained in March 1850, “in the midst of all this enterprise, the people of Washington County remain unmoved. With railroads passing all around them, they are content to have nothing but the shabbiest country roads over which to take their produce....”³³

Bausman’s criticism was premature, however; the state was about to charter a railroad that promised to cross the county from East to West and run directly through Washington Borough.

The Hempfield Railroad sought to create a direct link between the B&O railhead at Wheeling and the Pennsylvania Railroad’s Central Route at Greensburg, in Hempfield Township, Westmoreland County, about 15 miles east-southeast of Pittsburgh, a distance of about 76 miles. To create this link, the Hempfield must traverse the center of Washington County, and the Borough of Washington would of course be directly along the route. Washington’s boosters, desperate to avoid economic perdition, believed that the Hempfield Railroad offered the best solution to the railroad dilemma. With Pittsburgh apparently uninterested in a railroad link to Washington, a partnership with Wheeling’s businessmen was the only viable alternative, and traditional loyalties to Pittsburgh could not overrule the new reality. Although Washington County was relatively prosperous, the costs of a railroad connection to either Wheeling or Pittsburgh were beyond its people’s ability or willingness to pay, so to supplement the modest individual investments that could be expected from farmers and businessmen adjacent to its route, outside partners and larger investors would become necessary. With a railroad’s costs beyond the local means to pay, attracting outside investors in the larger financial markets and through municipal investments became a necessary strategy. As

³³ *Washington Reporter*, March 13, 1850.

Carl Abbott notes, cities continued to be the engines and guiding forces for regional economic development long after the frontier stage passed, and railroads were no exception.³⁴

Towns and cities were not only population focal points, they also represented concentrations of capital. In Pennsylvania, direct state funding for internal improvements was minimal, leaving private investors and local governments to share the burdens. Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, with their surrounding counties, accounted for a quarter of the state's population and three-fourths of its manufacturing base, clear indicators of their combined economic power, with Philadelphia naturally the senior player. For example, Philadelphia provided \$5 million for the PRR in the 1840s, and Pittsburgh another million.³⁵ Despite objections from Pittsburgh's and their allied representatives in the legislature, the Hempfield Railroad Company received its Pennsylvania charter in March 1850, and Washington's business leaders showed their endorsement and support by being well represented among the initial stockholders.³⁶ When community elites stepped forward to lead various internal improvement projects, banks, or other larger scale ventures, their ability to demonstrate compelling community needs and benefits from internal improvement ventures was a key component in rallying public support for investment, whether through private means or municipal subscriptions, and as Carl Abbott points out, a key ingredient to success was the ability to conflate the public interest with their own commercial advantages.³⁷ This task was made somewhat easier in Washington County thanks to the preexisting fear that the National Road was about to become irrelevant.

Washington's business and political elites were certainly not blind to the animosity that characterized the Pittsburgh-Wheeling relationship. Indeed, the protracted Wheeling Bridge case

³⁴ Carl Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen*, 15.

³⁵ John Majewski, "Political Impact of the Great Commercial Cities," 11.

³⁶ Hempfield Railroad Charter issued by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, December 19, 1850; xv-1-1, HAMWJC.

³⁷ Abbott, 5.

alone was a high-profile display of intense rivalry that no serious local observer could miss. Pittsburgh and Wheeling were engaged in a long-term battle for economic dominance of the Upper Ohio Valley, and each one's motives and actions were regularly questioned or assaulted by the other.³⁸ Washington's railroad boosters had to know that their cooperation with Wheeling on the Hempfield Railroad would elicit a firestorm of protest from Pittsburgh, but they forged ahead with their plan undeterred. This decision illustrates again that with the high economic stakes involved in the railroad transportation revolution, self interest trumped local partisan considerations as well as interstate and intrastate loyalties. In this railroad-building quest, there were no permanent adversaries or friends, but rather, relationships were determined on an *ad hoc* basis as the perceived needs of self-interest dictated. Likewise, Washington's railroad boosters did not see political boundaries as barriers to their ambitions, as their partnership with Wheeling, Virginia, indicates. Washington, which had shared a common western Pennsylvania loyalty with Pittsburgh and so recently aligned with them on railroad issues, now threw its support to its chief rival and that city's apparent scheme to subvert Pittsburgh's East-West railroad connections. This was not done out of spite, disloyalty, or other nefarious motive, but in pursuit of Washington's economic self-interest as the market revolution's influence expanded across the region.

In countless towns and cities during the antebellum period, local newspapers served as staunch railroad boosters, and Washington was no exception.³⁹ The newspapers provided not only their own editorials, but a platform from which the booster businessmen's meetings, reports, and other information could be disseminated on a regular basis. Throughout the late 1840s and 1850s, Washington's newspapers supported railroad development regardless of partisan

³⁸ Catherine Reiser, *Pittsburgh's Commercial Development, 1800-1850*, 141-43.

³⁹ Abbott, *Boosters and Businessmen*, 4.

affiliation. For instance, John Bausman, pro-Hempfield editor of the local Whig newspaper, the *Washington Reporter*, could not have attached more weight to the railroad question as a matter of community survival, bluntly saying “take from us this improvement and we are ‘left high and dry.’”⁴⁰ In a June 1853 editorial, the *Washington Examiner*, a long-time Democratic organ, predicted “over this great thoroughfare will...pass daily long trains of cars freighted with the surplus wealth of the valley of the Mississippi. Thousands of travelers from the East and from the West will pass over it through the very heart of our County.”⁴¹ Further, the *Examiner* argued in the same editorial that the Hempfield’s benefits would not be limited to Washington Borough, but rather, the county at-large would benefit in the same proportion from the direct rail access. “That the business of the place will be increased very considerably we see no reason to doubt,” the *Examiner* concluded.⁴² It is noteworthy that the *Reporter’s* owner and editor, John Bausman, was on the Chartiers Valley Railroad’s original Board of Incorporators in 1853.⁴³

Predictably, Pittsburgh’s reaction to the Hempfield Railroad plan was decidedly negative, fearing that it would damage their commercial and manufacturing base. Western railroad commerce was seen as a zero-sum game: if the Hempfield succeeded, it had to come at Pittsburgh’s expense, they reasoned.⁴⁴ Rhetorical attacks and counter-attacks soon filled the newspapers in both Pittsburgh and Washington, Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh’s opposition did not deter Washington’s plans, but drew them ever-closer to their allies in Wheeling and Philadelphia. The Pittsburgh *Commercial Journal* on January 18, 1851 commented that preventing the Hempfield Railroad would be worth the effort, which moved the *Washington Examiner* to

⁴⁰ *Washington Reporter*, February 9, 1853.

⁴¹ *Washington Examiner*, June 11, 1853.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, March 17, 1853.

⁴⁴ *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, January 18, 1853.

reassert their town's right to pursue its own path to secure its economic well-being.⁴⁵ While recognizing Pittsburgh's right and duty to promote its own interests, the *Examiner* stung them by stating that "they do not seem to be aware that there are other portions of the state to be legislated for; ...other sections entitled to the same benefits of public improvements, and that there are other counties having internal resources that should be developed."⁴⁶

The *Examiner's* charges of Pittsburgh selfishness were strikingly reminiscent of the ridicule that Representatives Donaldson and Rider heaped upon Philadelphia just a few years earlier, further underscoring the shifting nature of allies and adversaries in the railroad-building quest. Now, instead of Philadelphia playing the part of the behemoth obstructionist, it was Pittsburgh. In its December 29, 1852 issue, the *Washington Reporter* waxed eloquently about Philadelphia's growing interest in the Hempfield and expressed a certainty that "the amount of stock required to finish the project will readily be taken in [that] city, provided the President is a Philadelphian," virtually inviting a Philadelphia representative to take charge and bring the Hempfield directly under the protection of a city that Pittsburgh could not intimidate or dominate.⁴⁷ In a nod of approval to Pittsburgh's traditional rival closer to home, a *Reporter* editorial on December 8, 1852 openly acknowledged, and even celebrated the fact that "to the spirit and enterprise of Wheeling will we be indebted for this important improvement when completed."⁴⁸ A September 1856 editorial in the *Washington Examiner*, written as the railroad had begun running cars between Wheeling and the vicinity of the state border about 16 miles west of Washington Borough, frankly and unashamedly admitted that the "completion of the Hempfield Railroad to Wheeling will bring us into closer business relations with that city.

⁴⁵ *Washington Examiner*, January 25, 1851. The *Pittsburgh Commercial Journal* itself is no longer extant, and its comments from the January 18, 1851 edition were reprinted in the *Examiner* editorial.

⁴⁶ *Washington Examiner*, January 25, 1851.

⁴⁷ *Washington Reporter*, December 29, 1852.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, December 8, 1852.

Sagacious merchants and businessmen are beginning already to take advantage of the new state of things...”⁴⁹

The Hempfield’s Pittsburgh adversaries were intent on finding a way to sabotage the project in its first years, and they grabbed at any straw available. For instance, anti-Hempfield activists alleged that the 1851 legislative approval of its charter was questionable because deliberate efforts were made to ensure the absence of Allegheny County representatives during the vote. This prompted a strident denial and rebuke from Westmoreland County state representative Harrison Perry Laird, one of the Hempfield’s strongest sponsors in Harrisburg, who explained that he was not motivated by “any spirit of unkindness towards the citizens of Pittsburgh.I am sorry to think that there are some who regard...the Hempfield Railroad as a calamity that will paralyze that city,” before strongly asserting that the bill had been passed in accordance with all accepted and normal legislative procedures.⁵⁰ Similarly, in an open letter to the Philadelphia *North American and Gazette* on July 22, 1852, the Hempfield’s chief engineer, Charles Ellet, Jr., who had also designed the Wheeling Bridge which Pittsburghers so hated, bitterly complained that one of the Pennsylvania Railroad directors from Pittsburgh had resorted to the “disreputable undertaking” of attacking his personal character as a means to undermine the Hempfield.⁵¹ When it was discovered in November 1852 that the Hempfield Railroad Company had mistakenly violated Pennsylvania’s General Railroad Act of 1847 by electing a majority of non-Pennsylvanians to the Board of Directors and a non-Pennsylvanian as president, the error was promptly rectified with resignations and new elections, but Pittsburgh detractors maintained that the correction was made only after the fact and the charter should be declared void and

⁴⁹ *Washington Examiner*, July 5, 1856; Ibid, September 13, 1856.

⁵⁰ *Greensburg (PA) Argus & Democrat*, November 7, 1851.

⁵¹ *Washington Examiner*, August 14, 1852. Article reprinted from *Philadelphia North American and Gazette*.

immediately forfeited.⁵² The Hempfield's Pittsburgh critics even resorted to parsing the language of the charter in a vain attempt to derail its planned crossing into Ohio County, Virginia.⁵³

The Iron City never really warmed to the Hempfield Railroad and continued to oppose it into the 1850s, but there were occasional hints that Pittsburgh might do something besides obstructionism. The Pittsburgh *Commercial Journal* commented on January 29, 1851 that since the Hempfield Railroad was apparently going to be built, the time for ridicule had passed, and the stark reality was that Pittsburgh "must have a connection with [the Hempfield] –and by some convenient avenue. Washington is the nearest point of intersection."⁵⁴ The Washington *Examiner* referred to this as "sensible talk," and hoped that the *Commercial Journal's* good sense would affect its readers.⁵⁵ The recent obstructionist titan to its north might yet become Washington's ally again.

The result of such "sensible talk" later culminated in the revival of the old Washington to Pittsburgh railroad plan. Under the new name Chartiers Valley Railroad (CVRR), it was intended to run adjacent to the Chartiers Creek between Washington Borough and the Pittsburgh suburb of Mansfield (now Carnegie), where it would theoretically link with the Pittsburgh and Steubenville Railroad, a then-planned thoroughfare which envisioned a route west from Pittsburgh, across the northern tip of Washington County and through the Virginia panhandle and into Ohio. For their part, Washington railroaders did not believe their cooperation with Wheeling on the Hempfield Railroad precluded them from working with Pittsburgh on a second project. Indeed, would it not be better for Washington to have direct links with both the Upper

⁵² *Washington Reporter*, December 1, 1852; *Ibid*, December 8, 1852; *Washington Examiner*, December 4, 1852.

⁵³ *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, February 7, 1853.

⁵⁴ *Washington Examiner*, February 1, 1851. The *Examiner* quoted the *Pittsburgh Commercial Journal* at length.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

Ohio Valley giants and the even larger cities that lay further afield in the iron network?

Pittsburgh investors and civic leaders apparently held a mirror-reverse view; cooperation on the Chartiers did not rule out continued opposition to the Hempfield. A citizens' meeting of Allegheny and Washington County residents convened in Canonsburg, Pennsylvania, on June 24, 1852 to discuss the issue, and Washington's elites, both Democrat and Whig, sounded the bell of renewed cooperation with Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. Speaking to the meeting, Washington luminary John Hoge Ewing acknowledged to the Allegheny County attendees that he was a stockholder in the controversial Hempfield Railroad, but assured them that he and Washington were friendly to all local railroads, including the proposed Washington-Pittsburgh line because of the great trade and commercial benefits, both local and long-distance, that would redound to all parties.⁵⁶ His remarks were met with applause and his themes were included in the formal resolutions adopted later in the meeting. A December 29, 1852 letter to the editor under the pseudonym, *A Live Citizen*, made a strident case for both the Hempfield and the proposed Chartiers Valley Railroad to Pittsburgh. Additionally, the writer argued at length for the construction of new plank roads between the county's leading boroughs and even further south to connect with Waynesburg, Greene County's principle town, which would create a strong local transportation network enhancing access to the vital railroad arteries. Speaking the language of resource exploitation and development, improved access to distant markets, and coloring it with optimistic booster rhetoric, *A Live Citizen* predicted a glorious future if these plans were completed. Challenging the citizenry to follow through, he urged them to "no longer suffer the natural advantages of this great rich and powerful county to go unimproved! Shake off

⁵⁶ *Washington Examiner*, July 3, 1852.

the lethargy.... On to work and redeem the slothful misspent years of the past.”⁵⁷ On February 7, 1853, the state chartered the proposed railroad between Washington and Pittsburgh as the Chartiers Valley Railroad Company, and directors opened subscription books, and began formulating engineering and construction plans.⁵⁸

For both the Hempfield and Chartiers Valley railroads, construction and completion were exceedingly difficult tasks, as cost projections, completion predictions, fundraising, and other estimates so often fell woefully short of expectations. The Hempfield was further burdened by legal challenges and sometimes by its own mistakes, adding more costs, delays, and frustrations. Washington entered its first railroad construction projects with a naive understanding of the costs, complexities, and difficulties that awaited them. When the Hempfield Railroad opened between Wheeling and Washington Borough in the fall of 1857, Washington’s frustration was manifest in the utter lack of public ceremony or even newspaper coverage to mark the event. There was no formal opening ceremony with local notables giving rousing speeches to mark the achievement and the new era of prosperity that the railroad was expected to bring. In the *Reporter*, the Hempfield’s opening was given short shrift, with the editor almost tersely noting that “the Hempfield Railroad is finished at this place and the cars are now running every day, Sundays not excepted, from this place to Wheeling,” adding that information about freight rates and arrival and departure times would be forthcoming in following editions.⁵⁹

The Hempfield’s 1850-1857 gestation period was, as noted, full of frustrations, obstacles, and setbacks. One of the most enduring and crippling problems were its perennial financial

⁵⁷ *Washington Reporter*, December 29, 1852. John Hoge Ewing was likely the author of the letter, as some subtle details match Ewing’s biography, and he was one of the earliest and most strident supporters of internal improvements, having held a contract to construct part of the National Road near Washington and having been an active railroad booster since the original WPRR scheme in 1831.

⁵⁸ *Laws of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Passed at the Session of 1853* (Harrisburg, PA: Thomas Fenn & Co., 1853), 42-45.

⁵⁹ Earle J. Forrest, *History of Washington County*, I, 793-94.

worries. Railroads were vastly more expensive and difficult projects than anything Washington had previously experienced, and while it was never a simple matter to finance even local turnpike road projects, the Hempfield's high expenses and incessant demand for more capital was perhaps the single most important obstacle it faced; indeed, the company was forced to abandon construction east of Washington Borough because of financial shortfalls, and despite its intent to resume the work, the Hempfield was never able to complete its original design before the B&O finally purchased it in the post-Civil War period. It was apparent almost from the beginning that the construction costs would be far in excess of what private local investors were willing or able to contribute. To solve this central problem, the Hempfield, like so many other small railroads, attempted to sell its securities to investors in distant financial markets and secure direct investment by municipalities who were expected to benefit from the operating railroad both through enhanced land values and trade opportunities, as well as direct profits. Municipal investment in its own local internal improvement schemes was not new to railroading, but in the Hempfield's case, there were two novel aspects for Washington. First, the sheer amount of capital needed was far higher than in previous small-scale, purely local projects, such as the Washington & Pittsburgh and Washington & Williamsport turnpike road companies. Second, the Hempfield's perceived significance attracted major capital investment from as far away as Philadelphia, over three hundred miles away from the Hempfield Railroad's location, and intense opposition from a nearby neighbor. These factors again testify to the growing importance and controversies surrounding railroads as the market revolution's accelerated in the 1850s.

Some investment aspects of the Hempfield Railroad did mirror traditional patterns found in small, local, community-supported improvements. Perhaps the greatest similarity was the pattern of local business elites in taking a leading, although not overbearing role in the initial

stock purchases. It was important for such men to show their support in order to entice others of more marginal means to follow suit, but it was also vital to avoid any appearance of attempting to hijack the project with disproportionate influence. Moreover, in an enterprise of such vast relative magnitude, it was impossible for the small-scale entrepreneurial-minded investor class in Washington to establish themselves as arbiters over the entire operation. With partners stretched across 80 miles from Wheeling to Greensburg, Washington's railroad boosters and investors were forced to maintain agreement and amity in a multi-lateral business alliance. The Hempfield's official printed Pennsylvania state charter, issued on December 19, 1850, after the initial minimum subscription requirements had been met, lists the initial subscribers and amount of shares they purchased. Although the subscriber list does not include residency information, thirty-two individuals can be positively identified as Washington Borough residents. Of these investors, 10 purchased a single share, and another 9 purchased two shares, meaning that 6 of 10 investors chose the safety of a very limited investment. Colin M. Reed, a leading merchant and Franklin Bank of Washington president, led the borough's investors with 20 shares, while seven others purchased 10 each, including four lawyers, a merchant, a physician, and one with no identifiable occupation. The mean investment among these 32 men was 4.31 shares, a modest but respectable initial investment in a risky project.⁶⁰ This investment pattern bears great similarity to earlier local developmental corporations, in which most investors made limited subscriptions, and even the leading investors did not make large stock purchases, thereby avoided excessive risk and possible charges that they were dominating or manipulating the company's affairs. By

⁶⁰ Hempfield Railroad Company Charter, December 19, 1850, xv-1-1, HAMWJC. Some of the investors had occupations that were difficult to classify into a single category. John Hoge Ewing, for example, was a licensed but non-practicing attorney who derived his income from a wide variety of sources, particularly through his small coal mine and commercial wool raising, but also through a variety of smaller business pursuits. Ewing defies easy classification, but because of his standing before the Pennsylvania Bar, he is classified among the attorneys. Others, tanners Jacob Miller and Nathan Brobst, and shoemaker Samuel Mount were classified among proprietary craftsmen rather than merchants.

the spring of 1852 arrangements were underway to put the Hempfield Railroad's various segments under contract all along the line from Wheeling to Greensburg, a decision that would later come to haunt the company because their dispersed efforts resulted in extremely high construction costs and no portion was completed and in operation until the fall of 1857, and even then it was only half finished. In 1854, the company suspended construction on the Washington-Greensburg link to focus on the Washington-Wheeling portion, with the intent of later completing the eastern half, but construction still proceeded at a snail's pace, and financial worries continued to plague the Hempfield.⁶¹

Private subscriptions were insufficient to meet the railroad's financial needs, and on February 24, 1852, Pennsylvania authorized Washington County and its boroughs of Washington and Monongahela City, to subscribe to the Hempfield Railroad. In May it extended the same ability to the borough of Greensburg, the railroad's eastern terminus and juncture with the Pennsylvania Railroad in Westmoreland County, giving them all license to issue bonds to raise funds for the investment.⁶² Although it is difficult to piece together a complete account of the Hempfield Railroad's finances, there is fragmentary evidence that can allow for some general observations and conclusions. As with most local and regional internal improvement projects, there was important individual private investment in the Hempfield, and like other railroads, it was heavily reliant on large-scale investment from a variety of sources, including large-scale capitalist investors, banks, insurance firms, and governments at the municipal, county, and sometimes state levels.

In addition to individual private investment, banks and other financial institutions frequently held railroad stocks among their assets, and the Hempfield did manage to attract some

⁶¹ Crumrine, *History of Washington County*, 395

⁶² *Laws of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania Passed at the Session of 1852* (Harrisburg, PA: Thomas Fenn & Co., 1852), 81-82, 617-618.

such capital investment. It is uncertain but likely that the Franklin Bank of Washington held Hempfield Railroad securities, especially since they were an authorized subscription agent for the Company.⁶³ One new financial aspect was the distant investors who either purchased the Hempfield's securities, although usually at a discount, or who at least expressed awareness and interest in them. One such example is the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company, which collapsed in the Panic of 1857. According to the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company's financial statements for 1857, the company held \$999,935 in various railroad securities, including twelve Hempfield Railroad bonds valued at \$6000. Although the Hempfield represented a small portion of this Ohio firm's portfolio, it still demonstrates that the Hempfield's securities were indeed circulating in regional firms.⁶⁴ Unlike Washington's turnpike corporations, the Hempfield Railroad attracted interest from private investors in the distant cities of Philadelphia and Baltimore. A March 1852 letter from a Philadelphia merchant to Thomas M.T. McKennan, then the Hempfield Railroad's president, assured him that Philadelphia merchants were curious about the Hempfield, assuring him that a visit to the Quaker City to meet with potential investors would yield significant new subscriptions.⁶⁵ That same month, a Baltimore bond dealer urged McKennan to sell the Hempfield's Washington County bonds in his city, where they would not be discounted as sharply as in New York.⁶⁶ In May 1852, the Philadelphia firm Edwards & Jenner requested a map of the Hempfield Railroad on behalf of a woolen manufacturer who "has acquired considerable property and who we suppose might entertain favorably the consideration of subscribing to the Hempfield's stock...."⁶⁷ The

⁶³ *Washington Examiner*, February 11, 1854.

⁶⁴ Mortimer Spiegelman, "The Failure of the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company, 1857," *Ohio History Journal*, Vol. 57 (1948), 261.

⁶⁵ J.W. Stull to Thomas M.T. McKennan, March 22, 1852, McKennan Papers, Box A-12, WCHSA.

⁶⁶ Robert Garrett & Sons to Thomas M.T. McKennan, March 29, 1852, McKennan Papers, Box A-12, WCHSA.

⁶⁷ Edwards & Jenner to Colin M. Reed, May 19, 1852, McKennan Papers, Box A-12, WCHSA.

Washington *Examiner* proudly noted in March 1853 that the Hempfield Railroad was a topic of discussion among some financiers in London, England. Mocking Pittsburgh's contempt for the Hempfield, the *Examiner* noted that "a work that attracts the favorable attention of the London capitalists is far from being insignificant in any respect. ...The fact that the route...does not lie in close proximity to the city of Pittsburg [sic] does not appear to lessen its importance in the estimation of moneyed men abroad."⁶⁸

Beginning in 1852, the Pennsylvania legislature began authorizing county and municipal subscriptions to the Hempfield line, allowing Washington and Westmoreland counties, as well as several boroughs, including Washington and Monongahela City in Washington County, and Greensburg and West Newton in Westmoreland County, to offer their financial backing to the project by issuing bonds to pay for stock purchases. After a special countywide election, in which voters approved the subscription 4449 to 2751, the Washington County commissioners subscribed to the maximum shares on March 23, 1852, and Washington Borough officials followed suit on May 14 by confirming the town's subscription.⁶⁹ Additionally, the Washington County borough of Monongahela City also subscribed to the Hempfield Railroad, as did the borough of Greensburg in Westmoreland County, and the city of Wheeling, Virginia, and its surrounding Ohio County.

Still, private and local municipal investment was insufficient to meet the railroad's incessant demands for working capital. The Hempfield's early financial shortfalls were a serious problem that could possibly ruin the entire scheme, but Philadelphia's interest in the project seemed to provide a desperately needed lifeline. A report compiled by the Hempfield's recently installed president, Robert T. Conrad, a Philadelphian, for the Finance Committee of the City

⁶⁸ *Washington Examiner*, March 26, 1853.

⁶⁹ *Washington Examiner*, February 17, 1859; Creigh, 364.

Councils of Philadelphia in January 1853 showed \$630,000 in municipal and county subscriptions, and \$279,000 in private investment, for a total of \$909,000. However, \$90,000 in private subscriptions were contingent upon the chosen route, and Conrad estimated that \$40,000 would be lost when the final route was decided, which would leave the railroad with \$869,000 in total subscriptions. Conditional subscriptions were a frequent problem in early transportation corporations, including roads and railroads, leaving the corporation in a position where it would lose some subscriptions regardless of what route it eventually planned. Conrad's report estimated that the Hempfield's total final cost for everything from construction costs to rolling stock, land damages, depots and other facilities would amount to \$2,850,000. Faced with formidable costs, the company always faced capital shortages, for subscriptions did not translate into immediate cash. The Hempfield's perennial need for additional investment and access to credit could not have been more pressing.⁷⁰

Given Pittsburgh's innate fear of the Hempfield, it is highly unlikely that it could have succeeded even in obtaining a charter from the state Legislature without support from Philadelphia-area representatives, and their subsequent financial assistance was almost as important. In pleading their case to Philadelphia's municipal government, the Hempfield president argued that the Quaker City's investment would be advantageous because their access the Western trade would be greatly enhanced, which would naturally benefit business conditions in Philadelphia. Furthermore, it would give Philadelphia an edge in trade with Washington and Westmoreland counties, the second and third most populous counties in the southwestern part of the state, the Pennsylvania Railroad's traffic volume and profits would be enhanced, and the

⁷⁰ Questions of Councils and Answers of the Hempfield Rail Road Company, January 25, 1853, 4-10, VP.757, Historical Society of Pennsylvania Library and Archive (hereafter HSPLA), Philadelphia, PA. Before agreeing to subscribe \$500,000 to the Hempfield project, the *Finance Committee of the City Councils of Philadelphia* required the railroad to answer seventeen detailed questions.

Hempfield itself would provide a profitable return on the investment. Without the Hempfield Railroad, the report continued, these advantages would fall unchallenged to Baltimore, one of Philadelphia's East Coast rivals.⁷¹

Despite Pittsburgh's obstructionism, the state legislature authorized Philadelphia to make a half million-dollar subscription to the Hempfield via a municipal bond issue, which the Quaker City promptly did, in effect making the City of Philadelphia the company's largest stockholder.⁷² As the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin* explained, "We regard the Hempfield railroad as in no sense a local work, but, on the contrary, an essential link in a great chain of improvements, by which Philadelphia is to be permanently connected."⁷³ With the influx of substantial Philadelphia capital coming to the Hempfield's financial rescue, the city's image in Washington County was completely rehabilitated and former animosity forgotten. Again, the theme of shifting loyalties is apparent. Because of the pressing needs of Washington County's economic self-interest, they would work with anyone willing to help, and they would not allow traditional regional or state loyalties to stand in their way. The Philadelphia subscription needed the state legislature's approval, and while Washington reveled in its newfound appreciation of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh's bitterness was apparent in its representatives' effort to interfere with the Philadelphia subscription, including a final but futile effort to make approval contingent upon Virginia's acceptance of the right-of-way for the Pittsburgh & Steubenville Railroad, the Iron City's pet project for access to Western trade.⁷⁴

All its efforts to deter Philadelphia's investment in the Hempfield failed, but they did succeed in further straining Pittsburgh's relationship with much of the business class in

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² *Washington Reporter*, March 23, 1853; Ibid, April 20, 1853.

⁷³ Ibid, January 26, 1853. The *Reporter* reprinted the story from *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*.

⁷⁴ Ibid, February 9, 1853.

Washington County, Philadelphia, and Wheeling, Virginia.⁷⁵ In the legislature, Pittsburgh's representatives and their allies tried but failed to delay the Philadelphia subscription by making approval contingent upon Virginia's granting of a right-of-way to the Pittsburgh & Steubenville Railroad, one of Pittsburgh's own schemes to improve its western trade. A legal challenge in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court also failed to overturn the subscription.⁷⁶ Some Pittsburghers were less than gracious as their efforts to obstruct the Hempfield Railroad again fell short. An angry denunciation of Philadelphia's "cold heartless selfishness" by the Pittsburgh *Daily Gazette* underscores the reality that traditional regional and state allegiances and partnerships meant little in the railroad race. "Pittsburgh should declare her entire and complete independence of Philadelphia," the *Gazette* editor grumbled. "What is Philadelphia to us more than Baltimore, New York, or Boston? Let us mark out our own path regardless of Philadelphia, as she pays no regard to us."⁷⁷ But amidst the rancor, there were occasional pleas for a return to cooperation between the western Pennsylvanian parties. "The people of Pittsburgh are our natural friends and allies. We have hitherto had but one common interest, and why should it not be so in the future," John Bausman posited in the *Reporter* shortly after the Philadelphia subscription. Washington's involvement in the Hempfield was never meant to harm Pittsburgh, Bausman further explained, but he also asserted that Washingtonians "have interests peculiarly their own, and against which it is not the province of Pittsburgh to wage a relentless war."⁷⁸

Again, it is clear that political parties, regional identities, and state loyalties were not determining factors in Washington's railroading enterprises. Instead, naked economic self-interest was the primary factor in determining their opposition or cooperation for various

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid, September 14, 1853.

⁷⁷ *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, February 2, 1853.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

projects, and the same is true among investors in the other communities involved. Because of her small size and relatively modest resources, necessity forced Washington to seek partnership with one of its larger neighbors, and when Pittsburgh showed no interest in reviving the old WPRR, it abandoned any traditional loyalties to their city and their common Western Pennsylvania identity in favor of cooperation with Pittsburgh's chief rival in the Upper Ohio Valley. Even Pittsburgh's support for the Chartiers Valley Railroad was likely as much a defensive move designed to tap into the hated Hempfield line rather than a sincere desire to pursue such a project. After all, it was the vast and growing West that was foremost in Pittsburgh's commercial mind at the time, not Washington County's limited market.⁷⁹

Even after Philadelphia's \$500,000 subscription in early 1853, the Hempfield's finances were still weak. President Robert T. Conrad's report on the company's finances at its annual meeting in November 1853 reveals that of the \$1,945,000 total stock subscriptions, only \$199,822, or about ten percent of the total, had been received by that time, and final construction costs were now estimated at \$2,986,778. At the same time, the *Washington Reporter* continued to predict the railroad's swift and successful completion, proudly noting that contracts had been meted out for segments all along the route, that much of it was already in an advanced state of construction, and that the Wheeling to Washington portion should be finished in about a year.⁸⁰ In covering the Hempfield Company's board of directors meeting in January 1854, the *Reporter* continued its optimistic financial assessment, noting that the "affairs of the Company are in a prosperous condition, and its present means ample for prosecuting the work vigorously."⁸¹ But despite Pittsburgh's continued periodic interference in the legislature and the courts, the slow construction pace, and perennial financial difficulties, the Hempfield Railroad did not fold under

⁷⁹ *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, November 13, 1851.

⁸⁰ *Reporter*, November 23, 1853.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, January 18, 1854.

the pressure, although it was forced to abandon work from Washington Borough eastward to the road's terminus in Greensburg in 1854 in the hope that with all efforts concentrated on finishing the portion between Wheeling and Washington. Nevertheless, construction still proceeded at a snail's pace, and by 1855, the Hempfield's financial woes forced the company to issue mortgage bonds to keep the enterprise afloat, leading to a foreclosure in 1861 and the railroad's operation by a trustee group. It was not until the autumn of 1857 that the Wheeling to Washington line was in operation, and the company found it was in no position to resume the work east of Washington Borough despite any desire to do so.⁸²

Beginning in 1859, the state required corporations to submit a standardized annual report, and although the Hempfield Railroad's report for that year was not complete, it revealed the railroad's income at an anemic \$33,152. The company's expenses were not included in the 1859 report, but it is likely that the railroad was barely profitable or was operating at a small loss. The 1860 report is missing from the state records, but the fiscal 1861 report included both receipts and expenses, which totaled \$25,427 and \$21,164, showing an operational profit of only \$4263, a far cry from the handsome returns that boosters so eagerly predicted throughout the 1850s. This small operational profit paled next to the company's mounting liabilities, including \$600,000 in debts.⁸³ The Hempfield's fiscal 1861 earnings were only .007% of its debt load, compared to the behemoth Pennsylvania Railroad, whose 1861 earnings equaled approximately two-thirds of its total debt load; clearly, the small Hempfield Railroad, with its truncated and isolated route, was a poor financial performer, and it soon fell into foreclosure and receivership, later to be purchased

⁸² Crumrine, *History of Washington County*, 395.

⁸³ Hempfield Railroad, *Annual Report of the Hempfield Railroad Company to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, Dec. 2, 1861, RG-14-2521, Carton 1, PSA, Harrisburg, PA.

by the B&O Railroad at a significant discount.⁸⁴ As the Civil War began, Washington could claim a railroad link to Wheeling, Virginia, but it had been an extremely expensive project, and it was not part of the grand thoroughfare that had been originally envisioned. Not only did the project take years longer than anticipated, it remained only half complete, and its predicted profits fell woefully short of its boosters' expectations.

In addition to its transportation implications and modern finance and investment patterns, the Hempfield Railroad's construction gave Washington's citizens a first-hand look at one of the market revolution's most significant aspects, namely a wage labor force, in this case mostly made up of Irish immigrants. Some Monongahela River areas on the county's eastern border had the beginnings of a working class thanks to the growing coal mines there, but the county's interior was comprised of rural farming communities and small towns, including Washington Borough, and these people were not familiar with large numbers of wage-earning day laborers in their midst. Like so many railroad construction experiences, these workers, mostly Irish immigrants, had a reputation for hard drinking and unruly behavior. The November 9, 1853 *Reporter* noted liquor consumption's adverse impact on many work crews and their discipline, which led to frequent disorder among railroad construction workers. "If whiskey could be banished from the vicinity of these poor creatures, we should have no occasion of recording these frequent incidents of outlawry."⁸⁵ A week later, the *Reporter* again addressed the alcohol issue and railroad workers, saying "in speaking of the riots and disorder among the laborers on our Railroad, we ascribe it to the too free use of intoxicating drinks. We are well satisfied that two-thirds of all the evil springs from this cause."⁸⁶ The February 8, 1854 *Reporter* again

⁸⁴ Ibid; Pennsylvania Railroad Company, *Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, December 12, 1861, RG-14-2521, Carton 1, PSA, Harrisburg, PA.

⁸⁵ *Washington Reporter*, November 9, 1853.

⁸⁶ Ibid, November 16, 1853.

mentions the alcohol issue on the railroad line, noting that all the “bosses” and 15-20 laborers had signed a pledge to stop drinking entirely, and expressed hopes that this promise would spread among all the work crews.⁸⁷ In March 1854, the *Washington Examiner*, a Democrat newspaper, noted that policemen had seized and destroyed a barrel of whiskey which had been carefully hidden by a gang of railroad workers. The *Examiner* also noted the “indignation of the Irish at this unceremonious destruction of the ‘good crathur,’ and we understand that they are determined to bring suit against the police officers and test their legal right to search and destroy this contraband property.”⁸⁸ This issue of drunkenness among railroad works could not but help add weight to the temperance movement that was so active during the mid-1850s, indicating a potential link between the market revolution’s contribution to a new working class presence and local social issues.

There were sometimes other issues besides liquor consumption that involved the railroad work crews. For example, in October 1853, a pay dispute between a contractor and his work crew of about 130 men resulted in a serious confrontation several miles west of Washington Borough. Under extreme duress from the workmen, the contractor was “forcibly removed...some distance to a shanty, where he was kept in close confinement and in imminent peril of his life,” according to the *Reporter*. The conflict was only resolved when the deputy sheriff, accompanied by Washington Borough’s militia company, arrived to quell the disturbance. In return for the contractor’s safe release, the deputy promised the disgruntled workers that he would do all in his power to ensure that their wages were paid promptly. It is noteworthy that in its commentary, the *Reporter* did not condemn the workers entirely for the disorder, but acknowledged that the contractor was heavily in arrears regarding his workers’

⁸⁷ Ibid, February 8, 1854.

⁸⁸ *Washington Examiner*, March 11, 1854.

wages, which represented their sole means of support. "...All things considered, we think the Irish behaved with wonderful forbearance, and the Contractor may thank his stars that he escaped so well."⁸⁹

While the Hempfield Railroad hobbled along in the 1850s, the Pittsburgh to Washington railroad idea was revived in the Chartiers Valley Railroad (CVRR), chartered by the commonwealth on February 7, 1853, with \$500,000 in capital stock. The same legislative act authorized both Allegheny and Washington counties, as well as Pittsburgh and several smaller boroughs, including Washington, to subscribe to the project⁹⁰ The CVRR drew some support from farmers, merchants, and businessmen along the Chartiers Creek between Washington Borough and Pittsburgh, but like the Hempfield, it was always short on cash and struggling to complete its route, although at about 22 miles, its distance was much shorter than the Hempfield's planned route from Wheeling to Greensburg. The CVRR had little of the controversy and drama that characterized the Hempfield's first few years, but it was plagued by financial difficulties to an even greater degree. Washington County and the borough subscribed enthusiastically to the CVRR just as they had the Hempfield. At a public meeting in Washington Borough on December 31, 1853, the vote was almost unanimous favoring a 500-share purchase totaling \$25,000. A stockholders' meeting in January 1854 was filled with optimism, both among the company's directors and in the newspaper coverage. The CVRR's president, J.K. Moorehead, was proud to announce not only a pending subscription from the City of Pittsburgh, but he also expressed his opinion that Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Railroad could be convinced to invest in the railroad, and the company's chief engineer predicted it would soon

⁸⁹ *Washington Reporter*, October 19, 1853.

⁹⁰ *Laws of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Passed at the Session for 1853*, 617-618.

carry heavy traffic and become one of the most profitable railroads in the region.⁹¹ In April 1854, contracts were awarded for the 23 one-mile segments, and interestingly, company director John Hoge Ewing received the contract for two sections near his own property along the route.⁹² By mid-summer, the *Reporter* was moved to note that “we have never known so large an amount of work to be done, with so few hands, in so short a space of time.... The contractors are all energetic men, and we fondly hope no pecuniary difficulties may interfere to arrest the continued progress of the work.”⁹³

Despite the optimistic booster-rhetoric found among company reports and newspaper columns regarding its imminent completion and subsequent profitability, the CVRR was not finished as predicted. Indeed, finances were such a problem that the company suspended construction by January 1855, and despite a brief attempted revival later that year, construction was again halted and work did not resume until 1870, when the Pennsylvania Railroad agreed to assist in the project, making the CVRR a fief to the larger company. The CVRR’s 1855 annual report revealed the extent of the difficulties in construction but continued to claim that work could be resumed shortly and completed within a reasonable time, certainly necessary rhetoric if investor confidence was to be maintained, along with its corporate charter. According to the report, the region’s financial and banking woes in 1854 made it impossible for the CVRR to sell its municipal bond holdings at anything near par value, explaining that “the depreciation of all corporate securities renders the negotiation of them difficult, and the discount at which they must

⁹¹ *Washington Reporter*, January 18, 1854.

⁹² *Ibid*, April 26, 1854.

⁹³ *Ibid*, July 12, 1854.

be sold in order to obtain money for them at all, adds materially to the cost of the road. Had the Board been able to negotiate the bonds...at par, the road would have been now finished.”⁹⁴

Just as the Hempfield Railroad found itself influenced heavily by distant or impersonal forces, so did the Chartiers Valley Railroad. In its previous turnpike road companies or even the more recent plank road companies, Washingtonians were in control of their own internal improvements vis-à-vis leadership and financing, but in the railroad age, outside investors, distant financial and banking institutions and markets, and even non-local leaders were harbingers of the industrial age that would grip Washington in the 1880s. Although Washingtonians served on the boards of directors in the Hempfield and Chartiers Valley railroads, both had significant outside leaders with equal or more influence. To help secure Philadelphia’s assistance, the Hempfield Railroad brought in Robert T. Conrad, a young Philadelphia judge, to be its president, and likewise, with Pittsburgh capital so important to the CVRR, one of its businessmen, James K. Moorhead, was president during most of its active years. Both railroads were also at the mercy of financial markets as they tried to sell municipal and county bonds which they had accepted for stock purchases. In the volatile markets of the 1850s, these bonds were rarely sold at par value, and at times there were no ready buyers whatsoever. Indeed, it was the Panic of 1857 which seems to have ended the CVRR’s revival altogether and prevented the Hempfield from even considering an attempt to construct its long-neglected branch east of Washington Borough.

The persistent financial difficulties which plagued the Hempfield and Chartiers Valley railroads prompted these companies to consider, along with the Marietta & Cincinnati Railroad in Ohio, which was also in difficult straits, a merger among the three firms under the name Ohio

⁹⁴ Chartiers Valley Railroad, *Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Chartiers Valley Rail Road Company, With an Exhibit of the Affairs of the Company for the year 1855* (Pittsburgh, PA: Journal Book and Job Office, 1856), 10-13, xv-j-195, HAMWJC, Washington, PA.

Valley Railroad Company. Many expected the Marietta & Cincinnati line to be Wheeling's great connection to southern Ohio and Kentucky, and the Hempfield to carry a heavy share of its freight and passenger traffic to the Pennsylvania Railroad's Central Route in Greensburg, Pennsylvania. A merger among the three firms would create a much larger regional corporation and end any lingering popular belief that Washington's railroad efforts were under its own local control. It was also widely seen as the most viable option in the face of financial duress. Stockholders in both the Marietta & Cincinnati and Hempfield Railroads heavily favored the consolidation, and the Pennsylvania legislature added its approval as well, but the apparent deal-breaker for the CVRR was the Hempfield's eastern branch from Washington to Greensburg, which it still intended to complete. The Chartiers Valley's directors and president, J.K. Moorhead, with a stockholders' majority behind them, saw the Hempfield's eastern branch as a costly irrelevancy, made redundant by the fact that traffic on the would-be Ohio Valley Railroad from Wheeling could link with the Pennsylvania Railroad directly at Pittsburgh. Accordingly, the CVRR rejected the consolidation and opted instead to pursue a preferred stock issue and mortgage bonds in order to complete their own line. The proposed merger did not take place, and both the Hempfield and Chartiers Valley railroads continued to struggle to survive.⁹⁵ It is impossible to tell whether the consolidation would have had any major impact, but without it, the Hempfield and CVRR both remained mere shadows of the busy and prosperous lines predicted by their boosters. By 1860 it was clear that the railroad construction game had turned out to be a far more difficult and vexing pursuit than Washington's citizens, including its business leaders, had envisioned in 1850. The market revolution had given Washington its first large-scale lesson in the harsh realities modern capitalism.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ *Washington Examiner*, December 27, 1856; *Ibid*, April 22, 1857.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, June 30, 1858.

III. Tax Revolt

The political and legal controversies that characterized the Hempfield Railroad's first four years were replaced by a new firestorm in the decade's final years. The company's financial condition continued to pose major problems as it bore the burdens surrounding both construction and interest payments on the various bonds it had accepted as payment for stock. The Hempfield's troubles were again highlighted in its report for 1856, much of which was reprinted in the *Reporter*, in which it was noted that interest payments were a particularly devastating drag on the company's resources, amounting to \$346,000, or almost 20% of the value of its \$1.7 million in capital stock. The report noted that "...the Company has been greatly embarrassed and crippled in its operations by being compelled to pay interest..." and noted that it was "impracticable for the Company to continue the payment of other interest hereafter accruing upon the subscription bonds delivered by the Counties of Washington and Ohio, the Borough of Washington and the City of Wheeling." The directors' report then warned those whose stock in the Hempfield had been purchased with bond issues that they should make immediate arrangements to assume interest payments on them. This move, the directors claimed, would allow for the road's completion, at least to Washington Borough.⁹⁷

Hoping to raise enough capital to press ahead with the railroad's western branch, the Hempfield stockholders voted to offer preferred stock and, more significantly, use the corporation's credit to issue mortgage bonds. The *Reporter* optimistically hoped that the moves would attract attention from eastern capitalists and salvage the road's completion all the way to its planned terminus in Greensburg.⁹⁸ Moreover, by 1857 there was growing public frustration at the Hempfield's slow progress in even constructing the link between Wheeling and Washington.

⁹⁷ *Washington Reporter*, January 14, 1857; *Washington Examiner*, January 17, 1857.

⁹⁸ *Washington Reporter*, July 22, 1857.

A letter to the editor in June 1857 signed “Many Tax Payers” reflects this impatience, asking pointed questions about the railroad’s finances, its decision to halt interest payments on the county bonds it held, and its real prospects for completion. “The People are becoming wearied about the completion of this road,” the author complained, and almost with an open distrust for the directors, added that they public was “anxious to know the true condition of things, so as to be prepared to meet it.”⁹⁹

Just as political partisanship had been a virtual non-factor in the right-of-way issue in the late 1840s and in the pursuit of the Hempfield and Chartiers Valley Railroads in the early and mid-1850s, partisan loyalties took a back seat in the “railroad tax” controversy that swept Washington County and some adjacent areas in the late 1850s. Faced with the Hempfield’s decision to end interest payments on the county bonds in their possession, the Washington County commissioners levied an unpopular railroad tax that ignited a spontaneous tax revolt that swept much of the county and became the single most pressing political issue in the county, even as Kansas, John Brown, Dred Scott, and section tensions in general developed into an open rift. Dividing lines in this political showdown were again bipartisan; many Democrats and Republicans who could agree on little else stood shoulder to shoulder in their attempts to kill the hated so-called railroad tax.

Washington County had subscribed \$200,000 in Hempfield Railroad stock in 1853 by issuing bonds, and the company had agreed to service the interest payments on the bonds in its possession until the railroad was completed. Construction delays caused by capital shortages, rough terrain, and Pittsburgh’s obstructionism plagued the Hempfield’s efforts, and the interest payments took a heavy toll on the Hempfield’s solvency. Even with the Philadelphia subscription of \$500,000, the Hempfield’s finances continued to struggle. The May 10, 1856

⁹⁹ Ibid, June 3, 1857.

Examiner warned that “the payment of interest...is a heavy draft upon the resources of the Road, and is particularly so at this time. Whether there is any way of getting rid of this exhausting and self-consuming process is a question we shall leave to others....” Reluctantly, the Hempfield’s directors decided to suspend the payments so that the money could be used to complete the Wheeling to Washington section, while at the same time, all work on the branch between Washington and Greensburg was halted.¹⁰⁰

The county did not take over the interest payments, believing the Company to be responsible, and bondholder William McCoy, of Wheeling, filed a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court in Pittsburgh against Washington County, the issuer of the bonds. *McCoy v Washington County* was heard in November 1858, and Judge Robert Grier’s opinion and instructions to the jury made it quite clear that the company’s agreement to pay the interest prior to the line’s completion was only written on the coupons, and nowhere in the actual terms of issuance, which was the only legally binding article. Accordingly, the jury found in favor of McCoy, leaving Washington County with the responsibility to service all outstanding bond interest as well as future claims.¹⁰¹ Because McCoy’s judgment fell just short of the \$2000 minimum required to request an appeal in the U.S. Supreme Court, and an appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court would likely be in vain, the county commissioners resolved themselves to avoid further litigation and accept the verdict and the interest expense. To meet the unplanned-for interest payments, the commissioners levied a 4-mill property tax for 1859.¹⁰²

The Anti-Tax movement began with a series of public meetings held around Washington County in January and February 1859, followed up by Anti-Tax Conventions at the courthouse in Washington Borough on February 21 and May 3, 1859. The anti-tax men were opposed to

¹⁰⁰ *Washington Examiner*, May 10, 1856; Crumrine, 395.

¹⁰¹ *Washington Reporter*, November 24, 1858.

¹⁰² *Washington Examiner*, December 23, 1858.

what they believed was an illegal and unjust tax imposed without the people's consent. Further, they charged that Washington County voters, as well as the then-county commissioners, had approved the bonds only because of the Hempfield Railroad's assurances that the company would service the interest payments until the line was completed. What was more, they said, the Hempfield Railroad had failed to finish the line's eastern branch to Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Therefore, even if the bonds were not based on misrepresentation, the company was still liable because of the uncompleted portion of the railroad, the anti-tax men reasoned. The conventions resolved to fight the tax in court, at the ballot box, and by popular refusal to pay it.¹⁰³

The anti-tax movement's rhetoric was not partisan-oriented, but instead appealed to general universal republican themes, including property rights, due process, consent in taxation, and the virtues of limited government, thus allowing ideological space for both Democrats and Republicans. At the May 1859 convention, Republican Pittsburgh attorney Thomas Wilson, who had represented Washington County in the original *McCoy* case, gave an impassioned speech against the tax, making favorable references to the American Revolution and the Whiskey Rebellion, and twice condemning "Jew-brokers."¹⁰⁴ But in none of the proceedings did the anti-tax forces frame the debate in terms of party affiliations. Indeed, both Democrats and Republicans were among its prominent leaders. Thomas Buchanan, a prominent Democrat from Mt. Pleasant in the county's northern section, served as the standing executive committee chairman, and Colonel Samuel Magill, another Democrat, was chairman of the February 1859 county convention. At the May 1859 county convention, Republican activist Dr. Robert Anderson was unanimously confirmed as president, and Republican Tom Williams was the keynote speaker urging them all on.

¹⁰³ *Washington Reporter*, February 23, 1859; *Ibid*, May 11, 1859.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, May 11, 1859.

The anti-tax activists vowed to oppose any and all candidates in the 1859 county elections who defended the railroad tax, and accordingly, the candidates from both parties were queried as to their positions on the issue. It is quite revealing that not a single candidate on either party's slate came out to defend the tax; on the contrary, every one of them replied in writing with some statement of sympathy and support for the anti-tax forces.¹⁰⁵ This grassroots anti-tax movement transcended partisanship and was strong enough to cause both parties' candidates to at least pay public homage to them. Indeed, it appears that Republicans and Democrats alike desired to tap into the anti-tax surge for their own political benefit. For example, when the anti-tax forces met the commissioners in the Washington County Court of Common Pleas in October 1859 in a *quo warranto* case challenging the commissioners' authority to levy the tax, the anti-tax side was argued by Republican attorneys, and a Democrat judge ruled in their favor, which allowed both parties to claim the tax revolt mantle just prior to the local elections.¹⁰⁶

In addition to the anti-tax movement's non-partisan tenor, there are some indications that geography played a role in determining its intensity. Its apparent greatest strength came from Washington County's rural sections that were not adjacent to the Hempfield's existing service, particularly the county's eastern half, which had expected the Hempfield to pass through their area, only to see construction abandoned there. Moreover, there are occasional remarks in both the anti-tax proceedings and Washington Borough newspaper editorials that indicate a rural-urban split on the issue. In correcting a mistaken belief among anti-tax advocates that their case against the commissioners in the county Court of Common Pleas had been delayed by the unpreparedness of the county solicitor, the *Washington Reporter* commented that "the story is

¹⁰⁵ *Washington Reporter*, August 24, 1859; *Ibid*, August 31, 1859.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, October 20, 1859.

industriously circulated among the *country people*..., [but] just the reverse...is true.”¹⁰⁷

Conversely, there are references in the anti-tax proceedings that speak out against big-city bondholders, “Jew-brokers,” and other allusions to an urban adversary, including the Borough of Washington, which to some rural dwellers was the closest representation of city interests and the new world of banking and finance.¹⁰⁸

Despite their early victory in the Washington County Court of Common Pleas, the anti-tax movement sustained subsequent defeats in U.S. District Court in late 1859 and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1860; a last ditch effort back in the local court of common pleas also met with failure. With their legal options virtually exhausted and the secession crisis beginning, the anti-tax movement faded away. But the experience reinforces an immutable theme in Washington’s antebellum railroad experience: economic self-interest, not party affiliation, was the paramount consideration on railroading issues, including matters of taxes to pay for them. Democrats and Republicans stood on both sides of the issue depending on their perception of their own and the community’s best interest.

Conclusion

Railroad issues were among the most pressing concerns in Washington County, Pennsylvania, in the antebellum period, chiefly because it involved the question of the county’s future economic condition. The National Road’s commercial importance was being eclipsed by the railroad age, with potentially dire consequences for Washington County generally, and particularly its commercial hub and political seat, Washington Borough. This paramount economic question naturally carried political implications. Throughout this period, Washingtonians showed a distinct disregard for partisanship where the railroad issue was

¹⁰⁷ *Washington Reporter*, August 31, 1859.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*; May 4, 1859; *Ibid*, May 11, 1859.

concerned. Men who were sworn adversaries on national issues found themselves in full concord when it came to the most fundamental question about local economic development. When it came to the railroad question, there was a strong tendency to put the community's perceived needs first, and that required a high degree of bipartisan cooperation. Democrats and Whigs (later Republicans) put differences aside to join forces on railroad issues; whether they were advocating railroad issues or opposing them, the common denominator was that they believed they were acting for the higher purpose of the insuring the best future for their community. It is not asserted that there was ever unanimity in Washington County where railroads were concerned, but whether one supported or opposed them, it was the perception of the community's well-being that guided the decision, not simple party loyalty.

Old associations, regional identities, and state loyalties also counted for little as Washingtonians attempted to ensure their well-being in the coming railroad age. When Washington County saw that supporting Pittsburgh's bid for the B & O Railroad right-of-way over Wheeling's was in its best interest, it sided with its fellow western Pennsylvanians and even joined the fight against the anti-right-of-way lobbyists from Philadelphia. Later, when given the opportunity to work with Wheeling, Virginia, to build a railroad that Pittsburgh viewed as a threat, Washington's old state and intra-state regional loyalties did not prevent them from, in effect, switching sides. In Washington's quest to keep herself directly associated with a major transportation and trade route, local self-interest was the trump card time and again. By the decade's end, it was no longer Pittsburgh who was the adversary in Washington's public mind, but perhaps the Hempfield Railroad itself. Years of spiraling costs and constant delays, topped off with a sense of betrayal over the bond interest issue and subsequent so-called railroad tax left many people feeling bewildered, embittered, and betrayed.

The political aspects of Washington's antebellum railroad experience were, then, a peculiar mix of principles and Machiavellian-ism. The basic core principle at work among Washingtonians was to ensure their continued economic growth and prosperity in the coming railroad age. To achieve this end, Washington's business and political elite led the county in whatever direction brought them closer to the goal. Pittsburgh, Wheeling, and Philadelphia were all considered friend or foe according to the circumstances, just as long as Washington's interests were being served. Indeed, this was Washington's appetizer to the full course meal of industrialization that would be served after the Civil War. To survive in the dog-eat-dog world of industrial capitalism, traditional notions of region, state loyalty, and even political party loyalty would sometimes have to be abandoned to get the best deals for their community to ensure its competitiveness and vitality.

As sectional rancor grew into open discord over the 1850s, Washington's most continuous high-priority issue was railroading. Social issues like temperance, or national issues like the tariff and slavery, certainly had importance during this period, but the railroad question was the single most enduring and high-stakes question, mostly because of its local immediate impact; the railroad debate was local and concrete, not distant and abstract. The market revolution's accelerating impact between about 1810 and the 1840s, including commercial agriculture, the spreading cash nexus and banking, now seemed to revolve around the railroad question. With a solid railroad link, the town and county hoped to adapt to the National Road's demise and perhaps thrive to an even greater degree, as many businessmen and boosters argued, but without access to the main transportation routes, stagnation and decline would surely follow. This was a compelling fear to so many who had grown used to the business generated by the National Road for so many years. The tariff question and the controversy over slavery in the

territories represented strong political issues with economic implications, and temperance was a powerful social force with political implications, but the railroads were of such consequence that they were the dominant local issue from the mid-1840s until the secession crisis. Just as the anti-tax movement was sputtering out, its disappointed supporters had little time to reflect on its implications, for a crisis of far greater proportions was about to descend upon Washington, and the political rancor in the next four years sidetracked the county's attention decisively away from railroad or other economic issues.

Chapter 6: Continuity and Wartime Washington

In 1870, Alfred Creigh, a local physician and amateur historian, published the first history of Washington County, Pennsylvania. Twelve years later, Boyd Crumrine, a local attorney and founding president of the Washington County Historical Society, published a second county history. Both Creigh and Crumrine offer detailed narratives for every township and borough in the county, carefully listing and describing the establishment and growth of villages, churches, schools, business enterprises, names of past county office-holders, miscellaneous achievements, and the like. Most striking about these works, however, is how they dealt with the Civil War, or rather, how they avoided it. Both books strictly limit themselves to regimental muster rolls and their battle records, and both authors studiously avoided any and all mention of the county's wartime experience beyond this. A third county history, by Joseph F. McFarland, was published in 1910, and although he ventured beyond the muster rolls and ballyhoo about regimental battle records by acknowledging local civilian aid organizations, he also chose to ignore the county's bitter political dissensions.

The wartime experience in both Washington Borough and the wider county is far different than the benign impression given to unsuspecting readers by way of omission in Creigh, Crumrine, and McFarland's histories. Although the war did not fundamentally revolutionize social, economic, or political patterns in the borough or the county, it was a politically intense, emotionally charged experience that resulted in a deeply fractured local political scene which sometimes flared into violence and whose bitterness lingered in political discourse for several years after the war's end. The war was still part of the recent past when Creigh and Crumrine published their histories, and even in the early twentieth century when McFarland was writing, it was still within living memory for many Washingtonians. It is understandable that all three

wished to avoid the riled emotions that could re-ignite if the war's old controversies, including the local so-called Copperheads and even alleged southern sympathizers, were dredged up and revisited.

Historians have debated the Civil War's economic, social, and political impact for decades, and a consensus opinion continues to be elusive, perhaps due to the fact that different sections, regions, towns, and cities were impacted in vastly different ways, and to significantly different degrees. The traditional view concerning the war's impact on the Union states emphasized it as an agent of profound change, including a surge in industrial growth, urbanization, and the beginnings of the modern capitalist-friendly state. Revisionists have argued that the war actually retarded industrial growth, that Republican economic measures represent the fulfillment of old Whig policies rather than radical new ideas, and that urbanization patterns and other social changes were likewise well under way in the antebellum period.

In his book *Town into City*, historian Michael Frisch demonstrates that Springfield, Massachusetts, experienced dramatic growth and industrialization during the war, resulting in significant and permanent local discontinuities with antebellum patterns. By contrast, J. Matthew Gallman in *Mastering Wartime: Philadelphia Fights the Civil War*, and *The North Fights the Civil War*, using Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as his case study and primary reference point, argues that the war did not bring substantial economic, social, and political change to the Union states. For Gallman, established antebellum patterns were not significantly altered by wartime pressures and conditions, even in the country's second-largest city. Gallman asserts instead that the North dealt with wartime exigencies with long-established forms. While Gallman convincingly argues that continuity represents the overall wartime experience in the

Civil War North, Frisch's work demonstrates that the war could, indeed, have transformative effects even on small towns.

Washington Borough's case is consistent with Gallman's broad argument for continuity rather than Frisch's example of profound change. Washington in 1860 was still a community of small scale producers with few signs of true modern industry. The existing manufacturing businesses were mostly small scale sole proprietorships or partnerships in which the owners worked alongside his few employees or apprentices, and most built products were made for local consumption within the town or surrounding county. Even the S.B. & C. Hayes Carriage Company, the town's largest manufacturing concern and largest employer with about 30 hands, was locally owned by the brothers Sheldon B. and Charles Hayes, who also worked with their crews producing wagons and carriages. The small Frisbie & Hitchcock Foundry, locally owned and operated by a handful of employees, represented the borough's largest metal works, a small-scale operation capable only of servicing local needs. Significant industrialization was absent from the borough in 1860, and consequently so was an identifiable working class in the sense of a self-aware wage labor force. Similarly, the town was still led economically, socially, and politically by the same group of small scale bourgeoisie merchants, professionals, land owners, and business proprietors that had been in place since the town's early days in the late eighteenth century.

Washington Borough in 1865 was little changed from its 1860 condition; indeed, the town did not experience the first truly transformational impacts of a modern industrial economy until the 1880s oil boom. With only small-scale local industry, there were few opportunities for government contracts. The town's largest manufacturer, the Hayes Carriage Company, did win a contract to build 100 wagons for the army in 1861, and William Blair, a local saddler, contracted

to produce 400 bridles, harnesses, and saddles for the army, but these were rare exceptions and only marginal in impact. It is expected that significant war contracts would be noted in the local newspapers, but the overall dearth of notices about such contracts in the only surviving local newspaper from the war years, the *Reporter-Tribune*, suggests that government contracts were not a major influence on the borough's wartime economy. Washington, unlike Springfield, Massachusetts, never saw a rapid population surge or demographic shift that so often accompanies industrial growth in the United States. Similarly, the county only had a few small pockets of true industrialization in 1860, with several significant coal mines and ship-building operations along the navigable Monongahela River, leaving the vast majority countywide engaged in farming or small-scale production and commerce.¹

There were few signs of new economic development in the Borough during the war, with no major expansions of existing industries and few new ones. Perhaps the only significant new local enterprise was a small coal mine established on the borough's western boundary along Catfish Run in 1864, which eventually employed about thirty men.² But in the larger sense, the borough and county's economic patterns endured relatively unchanged throughout the war. Washington County in 1860 was the largest wool producing county in the United States, and the War Department no doubt purchased local wool for uniforms, but even this would not qualify as a major deviation from the county's antebellum agricultural patterns. Rather, it merely signifies a different customer for an existing exported commodity, not a fundamental economic shift. As Gallman notes, although the Federal government did make significant purchases of a wide variety of goods throughout the war, these orders "generally replaced civilian demands for the

¹ *Reporter-Tribune*, August 1, 1861.; Ibid, November 14, 1861.

² Department of the Interior, *Manufactures Census for Washington County, Pennsylvania, 1860*, Pennsylvania State Library Microfilm Collection, Harrisburg, PA.

same commodities, limiting any overall net increase in the demand for these products.”³ In terms of industrial and agricultural patterns, the Civil War made virtually no significant difference in local economic activities and patterns. Wool is an excellent example of a commodity already in high production but with a new customer; the war produced no dramatic shifts in local agricultural patterns, nor did it cause a dramatic expansion in that sector. The same can be said for the borough’s local industries; existing enterprises were either untouched by the war economy, or they merely transferred production from civilian customers to the Federal government. Washington Borough’s railroad connections also remained limited and unchanged during the war years. The Chartiers Valley Railroad abandoned construction efforts on its link between Washington and Pittsburgh in 1856, and occasional rumors about its revival during the war came to nothing. The Hempfield Railroad connection with Wheeling, (West) Virginia, completed in 1857, remained the sole link throughout the conflict, leaving Washington at the terminus of a small branch, not directly on a major trunk line, adding another relative disadvantage to its better-placed, more industrialized, much larger neighbors, Wheeling and Pittsburgh, when it came to taking advantage of demands for manufactured war materials.

Washington did not see any major social change during the war, either. In the antebellum years, the borough was a relatively small, cohesive community with an overwhelmingly white, native Pennsylvanian, Protestant population. With virtually no major industrial development, there was neither a distinct and conscious working class nor any appreciable class tension and conflict equivalent to what could be found in major cities like New York, Philadelphia, or Pittsburgh matter. Indeed, the community of small-scale producers and merchants that characterized Washington’s socio-economic structure in the early nineteenth century had

³ J. Matthew Gallman, “The Civil War Economy,” *Northerners at War: Reflections on the Civil War Home Front* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2010), 98.

changed little by the war's arrival. In 1860, the county was home to 1,726 African-Americans, accounting for 3.7% of the total population, and in Washington Borough, blacks numbered 435, representing 12% of the town's inhabitants, a significantly higher proportion than the county average.⁴ Washington's African-Americans had always been economically marginalized, socially aloof from white society, and disenfranchised from politics. During the Civil War, Washington's African American population occupied a precarious position as local tensions rose to a fevered pitch, with slavery and emancipation debates frequently at center stage, and at least once, in 1863, local blacks were terrorized by local Copperheads. The war years and the Reconstruction period saw no revolution in the local black population's economic, social, or political status.

The 1860 population census for Washington Borough reveals the marginal economic status among the local black population. The 117 African-Americans with a specified occupation include 87 males and 30 females, with unskilled or service jobs prevailing. Among black men, a mere few were skilled craftsmen, comprised of two gunsmiths, three shoemakers, and a carpenter, whereas just over half are classified as general day laborers. Another twelve were employed as waiters, porters, servants, stewards, and cooks at the local hotels and restaurants. Taken together, almost two-thirds of employed local black men held employment as unskilled laborers or servants. There were also six barbers in Washington Borough, all of whom were African-American, giving them a monopoly on this semi-skilled but highly valued trade. Among the 30 women with an employment categorization, all were associated in some way with domestic service or laundering in local homes and hotels. Among Washington Borough's African-Americans in 1860, only 27 owned any real property, and values in the manuscript

⁴ Department of the Interior, *Population of the United States in 1860: Compiled From the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1864), 436.

population census range between \$100 and \$1500, with a mean value of \$390. Collectively, African-Americans claimed a mere \$10,530 in real estate value, compared to the \$53,000 held by Dr. Francis LeMoyne alone. Socially and economically marginalized, Washington's black population did not see its position significantly altered in 1865 or the decades beyond.⁵

The 1870 census data for local blacks shows very little change from the immediate antebellum period. Just as the overall borough population stagnated between 1860 and 1870, so did the local African-American population, which actually saw a net decrease of seven people during the decade. Of the 89 African-American men with an occupational classification in the 1870 census, 68 were listed as day laborers, representing just over three-quarters of the total. Similar to 1860, all seven of the borough's barbers in 1870 were African-American, and only three black men were listed with a skilled trade, including a blacksmith, shoemaker, and teacher. Of the 26 black women with an occupational classification, 17 were servants in private residences or local hotels, while another 8 were laundresses. In 1870, 24 local blacks recorded real property ownership in the census records, with an aggregate value of \$13,750 and a mean average of just \$572. Only three black property owners were valued over \$1000, and the highest at \$2000 compared to Dr. LeMoyne's 1870 real estate value of \$115,000. Unsurprisingly, the economic gap between blacks and whites, including both occupational trends and property holding, was persistent and largely unchanged during the Civil War decade.⁶

The borough also hosted a relatively small immigrant population, made up entirely of Germans, English, Scots, and Irish, both Protestant and Catholic. At mid-century, the borough's immigrant community (if term "community" is applicable, given their small numbers) was

⁵ Manuscript Population Census for Washington Borough, PA, 1860, Citizens' Library Microfilm Collection, Washington, PA.

⁶ Manuscript Population Census for Washington Borough, PA, 1870, Citizens' Library Microfilm Collection, Washington, PA.

generally well integrated into social and economic life, and a significant proportion of their numbers were successful businessmen, skilled craftsmen, and property owners. Germans had long been settled in the community and were the single largest immigrant group in the borough, and according to the 1860 population census, 46 of the 48 German immigrant men aged 17 years and older have a listed occupation, with thirty skilled craftsmen and tradesmen, six working in food service and hotel keeping, three were listed as clerks or merchants, and only three were classified as mere laborers. Of the 48 adult German men in the borough, 39 claimed to own at least some property, with twelve valued between \$100 and \$200, and 15 men claiming at least \$1000 in real and personal property.⁷ Perhaps a further indicator of the small German community's vitality was the establishment of a German Evangelical Lutheran church in the borough in 1812, although it was not formally incorporated until 1840, the town's only overtly ethnic-based congregation. By the mid-1800s, the sons and grandsons of early German immigrants could be found among Washington's prosperous craftsmen, merchants, and local office-holders, testifying to the relative ease with which Germans, particularly Protestants, could integrate into local society. The borough only had 21 adult male immigrants from England and Scotland in 1860, including ten craftsmen, three men in the woolen trades, a clerk, minister, physician, and a comfortably retired gentleman. Like German immigrants, the English and Scots were mostly skilled craftsmen, and they also tended to own at least some property, with 14 of the 21 listed claiming at least some personal property in the 1860 census, and five men claiming at least \$1000 in real and personal property.⁸

The census data gives a preliminary indicator that the English, Scots, and German immigrants were full participants in the town's economic life, with strong prospects for at least

⁷ Manuscript Population Census for Washington Borough, 1860.

⁸ Ibid; Alfred Creigh, *History of Washington County: From Its First Settlement to the Present Time* (Harrisburg, PA: B. Singerly, 1871), 188.

some upward mobility. It is difficult, however, to differentiate between Protestant and Catholic Irish immigrants, since no distinction was made between them in the census data. The records do indicate what appears to be a small number of Irish Catholic immigrant men, based on their classification as day-laborers and general lack of real and personal property, although it is not necessarily the case that these poorer laborers were Catholics and that propertied men born in Ireland were from the Protestant regions. Of the borough's 43 adult males born in Ireland, 40 have an occupation listed in the 1860 census manuscript, and of these, 22 were classified as day-laborers with little or no property, making them likely Irish Catholics. Of these 22 laborers, none apparently owned real estate, eight had no property of any kind, and 14 claimed personal property between \$30 and \$200, with only one reaching the \$200 level. Even allowing that some of the skilled craftsmen and other more prosperous men listed as Irish-born could also be Catholics, the overall number of Irish Catholics in Washington Borough, as well as most of the county, remained relatively small at mid-century, and this subset of the immigrant population posed no obvious threat to the prevailing native and Protestant society. There are no records of any major local anti-immigrant outbursts or even anti-immigrant editorials in the local press during the antebellum period, most likely because their numbers were so small, and, at least in the case of Germans, English, Scots, and Protestant Irish, they were highly integrated into the local economy and society.

With no significant economic opportunities generated by extensive war contracts or a general industrial expansion, as in Springfield, Massachusetts, Washington was not a magnet for immigrants, or domestic migrants for that matter, and ethnic considerations appear to have played no important role in the wartime experience.⁹ Not until the 1880s and 1890s, with the rapid expansion of the oil, glass, and steel industries, would a significant number of immigrants

⁹ Manuscript Population Census for Washington Borough, 1860.

arrive and change local demographics. This was a stark contrast to nearby Pittsburgh, where by midcentury immigrants represented a significant portion of the city's population and filled the majority of manual labor jobs.¹⁰

Socially accepted gender norms remained intact as well. Although Washington women were encouraged to support the soldiers and the war effort, they played passive political roles relative to their male counterparts and participated in support activities that reflected antebellum gender expectations. Unlike towns and cities with significant war industries, Washington's women had few opportunities to push the envelope of established gender roles, for instance by taking on war-related industrial jobs. Similarly, while the local newspapers often published letters and other news from local physicians working in hospitals or in the field, there is no corresponding coverage of local women serving in nursing capacities. There can be little doubt that some local soldiers' wives took on responsibilities that were once their husbands', but there is no way to measure this. It is demonstrable, however, that at least some local women held definite political opinions about war and peace issues, and this was nothing new. For example, in an 1847 letter Sarah Foster, the Washington Female Seminary principal, to school trustee John Hoge Ewing, she expressed her clear opposition to the Mexican War. "I am sorry to hear of so many which are aiding the war in Mexico. I mean volunteering to aid in an unrighteous war. I am scarcely willing to pay a tax on tea or coffee to bear my part of their expenses," she complained to Ewing. There is no record, however, of Foster making any public statement on the war whatsoever, again indicating an established tradition that women, even if well positioned and respected, were unequal political participants.¹¹ Indeed, at her retirement ceremony in 1874

¹⁰ Christopher Clark, *Social Change in America: From the Revolution Through the Civil War* (Chicago Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 182.

¹¹ Sarah Foster to John Hoge Ewing, January 4, 1847, Ewing Collection, Box A-4, Washington County Historical Association Archive (hereafter WCHSA), Washington, PA.

she was, perhaps predictably, praised in womanly terms for her efforts during the Civil War for giving “abundantly to the soldiers during the war, and no one contributed more heartily in fitting out troops and sending supplies for the sick and wounded,” all perfectly acceptable feminine activities in wartime.¹² Women could and did have political opinions and interests like their male counterparts, but to discuss controversial issues publicly was socially unacceptable both before and during the war.

In antebellum Washington Borough and across the county, the prevailing gender norms were evident in virtually every aspect of social conduct, with the separate-spheres doctrine entrenched in local institutional development and social patterns. In business, politics, education, religion, and the various voluntary organizations, men monopolized the leading roles and women were typically relegated to subordinate support positions. During the war, local citizens turned to traditional organizational approaches to meet the war’s extraordinary demands, with soldiers’ aid societies the most significant among them. From the war’s beginning it was clear that there would be no local revolution in gender roles, and the separate spheres doctrine was not seriously challenged or disrupted in this largely rural county and its provincial small towns, including Washington Borough. Indeed, as historian Mary Ryan notes, “The most immediate impact of women’s presence at the rallies...was to fill the air with cloying gender stereotypes and recruit women to traditional roles on the sidelines of the public sphere.” This was evident in Washington Borough, for example, where women sewed a special flag for the Hopkins Infantry company before its departure in April 1861. The entire flag presentation event was conducted by men, save for the moment the banner was actually turned over to the company, which was apparently the appropriate limit of direct female participation. In accepting the flag,

¹² Washington Female Seminary, *Commemorative and Farewell Reunion of the Graduates and Teachers of the Washington Female Seminary: In Honor of Sarah R. Hanna* (Pittsburgh, PA: Bakewell & Marthens, 1874), 10.

company captain James Herron Hopkins recalled Republican Rome's virtuous and strong women who stolidly held the home front together when their men marched off to the perils of battle. From the first public war meetings in spring 1861 and throughout the many subsequent political rallies and other war-related public events, men consistently monopolized the leadership roles, leaving women to be heard only through their applause and cheers.¹³

Both the Union and Confederacy depended heavily on female and family labor to help meet the soldiers' needs and keep the home front economy producing. Like their counterparts elsewhere, Washington women formed or participated in a wide variety of voluntary associations designed to support and assist the war effort, including various soldier aid societies, such as local chapters of the Christian and Sanitary commissions, as well as various independent groups, like the Ladies' Knitting Association of Washington County. As historian Nina Silber notes, women's aid societies provided all manner of material support, including food, clothing, medical supplies, and other items, holding fairs and other events to raise additional funds for relief efforts. Newspaper coverage provides the only extant accounts of these civilian aid organizations in Washington, and it is clear that women provided the labor and leadership that produced a variety of aid items or raised funds, and they appear to have been often free from patriarchal authority in their day-to-day operations, particularly in the purely local organizations that were not affiliated with a national organization. Nevertheless, these women's aid organizations frequently had at least some patriarchal influence to either provide moral sanction or to perform any duty that was seen as a masculine preserve, like handling the organization's finances, especially when a national organization was involved, such as the Sanitary Commission.¹⁴

¹³ Mary Ryan, *Women in Public: Between Banners and Ballots 1825-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 142; *Reporter-Tribune*, May 2, 1861.

¹⁴ Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 163-164.

The *Reporter-Tribune* often noted the various contributions from women's aid societies and charitable events like concerts and fairs, and also frequently acknowledged their patriotic presence among the audiences at Union League meetings and other political rallies. But women's roles were always portrayed through the gender patterns established long before the war; their roles as care-givers, healers, and passive supporters was lauded, but leadership positions and prominent active political participation was not part of their experience. Similarly, local women were lauded for their efforts to raise money for soldiers' aid projects at the 1864 county fair by providing meals and selling a variety of foods and other goods. These persistent gendered proscriptions on female participation and behavior is not surprising and was replicated in countless communities in both the Union and Confederacy.¹⁵

Indeed, throughout the war, women across Washington County, including its leading borough, performed invaluable support work for the soldiers' benefit. As historian Jeanie Attie notes, the Union lacked the institutional basis for a rapid and deep official mobilization effort, their soldiers frequently relied on supplemental supplies and materials sent from home, and these critical supplies were made possible by the broad mobilization of local resources through voluntary organizations. Across the county, women produced a wide variety of products for the army, either collectively or individually, ranging from baked goods to socks and blankets. War-relief and assistance organizations including the Sanitary Commission, Christian Commission, Ladies' Aid Society, and other similar groups, relied heavily on the established patterns in antebellum voluntary organizations, such as the temperance leagues and poverty relief clubs.¹⁶

¹⁵ Rachel Filene Seidman, "We Were Enlisted for the War: Ladies' Aid Societies and the Politics of Women's Work During the Civil War," *Making and Re-Making Pennsylvania's Civil War*, William Blair and William Pencak, eds. (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press), 60-62; *Washington Reporter-Tribune*, September 28, 1864; Mary Ryan, *Women in Public*, 142.

¹⁶ Jeanie Attie, "Warwork and Domesticity in the North," *Divided Houses*, Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (eds.) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 248-49.

The Republican-Unionist borough newspaper, the *Reporter-Tribune*, frequently published small updates on the various women's aid societies,' and their coverage demonstrates the inherent contemporary gender biases that persisted throughout the war. For example, when commending the Ladies' Knitting Association of Washington County in January 1862 for its abundant production of woolen socks for Pennsylvania soldiers, the editors urged the women onward, somewhat condescendingly, by adding that "we might as well remind the ladies that the war is not over and woolen stockings are necessary in summer as well as winter," as if Washington's women were so feeble-minded as to be under the illusion that victory had already been won.¹⁷

At least some local women seem to have taken some interest in the Civil War's political aspects, as evidenced by the letters written by brothers David and Marcus Acheson to their mother, which frequently included descriptions of marches, skirmishes, and miscellaneous army news, as well as political commentaries. For example, in a January 27, 1863 letter to his mother, Captain David Acheson expounded with detail his opinions regarding the choice of a new commander for the Army of the Potomac, explaining that "someone must be placed in command here who will be able to bring order out of confusion and reorganize our army. I have every confidence in Burnside and would rather fight under him than under McClellan." Indeed, David Acheson's letters to his mother contain virtually the same mixture of personal news and military-political commentary as those he wrote to his father.¹⁸ Mary Acheson was active in local women's aid societies, but she played no public political role even remotely similar to her husband, Alexander W. Acheson, one of the most prominent Unionists in the county. It is not

¹⁷ *Washington Reporter-Tribune*, January 30, 1862.

¹⁸ David Acheson to Mary Wilson Acheson, January 27, 1863, ed. Jane M Fulcher, *Family Letters in a Civil War Century: Achesons, Wilsons, Brownsons, Wisharts, and Others of Washington, Pennsylvania* (Avella, PA: Privately published, 1986), 367.

surprising that women were compelled by existing social constraints to remain publicly silent or passive on issues which men debated freely and vigorously, and remaining in within their accepted sphere. As Elizabeth Leonard notes in *Yankee Women: Gender Battles in the Civil War*, even in areas where accepted gender roles were amended or adjusted during the war, these changes often did not survive into the postwar period, and prevailing Victorian gender norms largely reestablished themselves in the postbellum period. Matthew Gallman observes that even prominent women, like Philadelphia's firebrand orator Anna Dickinson, could never overcome being judged in gendered terms by both supporters and critics alike. In the insular small town and rural life that defined Washington, wartime pressures and opportunities were insufficient revolutionize local women's political and social roles.¹⁹

The war did not produce significant changes to economic development, class structure, African-Americans, or immigrants. Likewise, the fundamental local political structures and patterns remained insulated from significant deviation. The antebellum period's partisanship and loyalties, contests for power, and local leaders all remained basically intact during the war years and immediately afterwards. Political rancor and even outright hostility was a long established fact of political life in Washington Borough and the wider county since its earliest days, but the war accelerated and intensified partisan warfare to a degree hitherto never experienced, and this was perhaps the war's most significant local impact. War-related political stress and conflict gripped the borough and surrounding county almost from the war's beginning until well after its conclusion. The first rumblings of discord emerged in spring 1861, and within a year it had escalated into open political warfare that characterized local politics for the conflict's duration and well into the Reconstruction period. Moreover, there were several violent incidents

¹⁹ Elizabeth D. Leonard, *Yankee Women: Gender Battles in the Civil War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1994), 21-22.; J. Matthew Gallman, "Anna Elizabeth Dickinson, Public Orator," *Northerners at War: Reflections on the Civil War Home Front*, 163.

throughout the war that exacerbated the intensity of the vociferous and ongoing issues-based debate.

The bitter, acrimonious political battles that characterized borough and county wartime politics were not a sharp break with antebellum patterns. On the contrary, political conflict and rhetorical warfare had a long tradition in local politics, dating at least to the Whiskey Rebellion of 1793-94. The heavy anti-Federalist sentiment of the 1800s and 1810s, and equally powerful pro-Jackson majorities of the 1820s gave way to a much more competitive political arena by the 1830s. While many voters remained true to the Jacksonian party and maintained a staunch loyalty to the Democracy, wool was quickly becoming the county's chief export product, and the Whig stance on protective tariffs became increasingly attractive, making it a viable party in Washington County and helping to form the basis for a significant anti-Democrat opposition. Not only were Congressional and presidential elections fought along partisan lines, state and local elections followed suit, and in this closely contested arena in the antebellum period, the local political climate was made more intense and emotional as party loyalists and activists keenly felt the gain or loss of virtually every vote. Elections from the 1830s through the antebellum period indicate Washington County as a highly competitive political arena between Democrats and their opposition, whether Whig or later, Republican, although the Democrats tended to have a modest upper hand until the late 1850s. Rarely did winning parties in various elections win with comfortable majorities, and no party could automatically assume that it would carry a winning percentage as a result of overwhelming voter loyalty. Throughout this period, the major parties were engaged in a sustained tug-of-war in the county's townships and boroughs, and oftentimes local elections were decided by a mere handful of votes, adding extra intensity to the competition. Vicious battles in the local press, political organizations, vigilance

committees, mass meetings, and sundry efforts to ensure a party's voter turnout were integral to local politics well before the Civil War.

Democratic candidates swept the Washington County elections in the 1850s when the Whig party collapsed and its supporters fragmented between the Know-Nothings, Free-Soil, Liberty, and other parties. These mid-1850s Democratic victories in the borough and across county did not experience any significantly increased number of Democratic votes than they had known prior to the Whig collapse; rather, their virtual electoral sweep resulted from the fragmented opposition, suggesting few outright defections from Whig to Democratic. Indeed, by the mid- and late 1850s, when the former Whigs and single-issue parties, like Free Soil and the Liberty Party, joined the Republicans, it immediately constituted a formidable opposition to local Democrat electoral power. In 1858, the Republicans made significant gains across Pennsylvania, including Washington County, much to the chagrin of local Democrats, who so recently had swept local elections and contributed handsomely to the vote totals for Democratic gubernatorial, congressional, and presidential candidates. In the 1859 off-year elections, the local Republicans again fared well, and in 1860, the Republican countywide surge accelerated, turning out majorities for all county and state candidates, as well as Lincoln's presidential bid. Although Washington Borough and other large pockets across the county continued to register Democratic majorities, local Democrats there could not help but notice their sagging political fortunes across the county, the state, and the country, both before and after the Secession Crisis, contributing to an increased sense of vulnerability, anxiety, and defensiveness.

Slavery and abolitionism, two major and interrelated wartime issues, were major political battlegrounds in Washington long before the immediate antebellum period and Civil War. It should be recalled that Virginia had once claimed the area that became southwestern

Pennsylvania, and many Virginians migrated to these lands during their initial settlement, bringing a number of slaves with them. Although never widespread, slavery had long been tolerated by the county's majority, likely because slaves were modest in number, and a widespread the desire to maintain amity with the county's few slaveholders, who tended to be influential landowners or businessmen. Additionally, there were significant and persistent local economic connections to western Virginia, where slavery was legal, and racist beliefs often viewed slavery as a better alternative to the possibility of adding to the free black population. After Pennsylvania passed its gradual emancipation law in 1787, the number of slaves sharply decreased, although a small number persisted in Washington County well into the 1800s. In 1790, there were 263 slaves across Washington County, in 1800 there were 84, and by 1810 the number fell to 36.²⁰ As the slave population declined, the free black population rose, numbering 742 in the county in 1820. The African-American population remained modest across the county and in Washington Borough. In 1860, there were no legally bounded slaves living within the county; and 1726 free blacks were spread across the county, including 435 in Washington Borough. The local black population lived and worked in social and economic marginality and subordination, as statistics taken from the Washington Borough's 1860 manuscript population census clearly demonstrate. Of the 121 black men and women with an identifiable occupation, the vast majority were day laborers, domestics, or other form of servant, including waiters, porters, and cooks at local hotels. Indeed, of the Moreover, of these blacks with an occupational classification, only 17 owned at least some real estate, with only two valued above \$500. Another 12 non-whites without an occupational classification owned modest amounts real property in the borough, eleven of whom were women, with many of these presumably widows. In short, the occupational and property-holding patterns among Washington Borough's black

²⁰ Crumrine, *History of Washington County*, 261.

population shows an economically marginalized people, and there is no reason to believe that the black population spread across the county fared significantly better.²¹

There were local anti-slavery men since the town and county's early days, with notable Washington townsman David Reddick a member of the Philadelphia-based Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery by 1792, although it is not likely that there was an active local chapter. The first recorded local anti-slavery society was formed in 1824, attracting about fifty members and headed by Rev. Andrew Wylie, the president of Washington College, pledging itself to both abolition and protecting the commonwealth's free blacks. Although other small chapters were founded across the county, the organization survived only briefly before it folded. By 1826, colonization societies were also beginning to appear, and by the 1830s, radical abolitionists were beginning to organize.²² Washington's most prominent abolitionist, Dr. Francis LeMoyne, had long been a lightning-rod for controversy since he embraced and began promoting the cause in the early 1830s, with some abolitionist public meetings threatened by violence from local opponents who had no desire to stir up the slavery issue. Less menacingly, but no less significantly, abolitionists were denounced in public meetings, like the large assembly held in Washington Borough in 1835, in which abolitionists were excoriated for creating unnecessary trouble and instability with their dangerous ideas. LeMoyne was the Pennsylvania Liberty Party's candidate for governor in 1841, 1844, and 1847, and its candidate for the 20th Congressional District, then comprised of Washington and Beaver counties, in 1846, and the results demonstrate abolitionism's marginal political support. LeMoyne's most

²¹ Ninth Census of the United States: Statistics of Population (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1872), 59. Tables include comparative numbers from previous censuses.

²² Membership certificate of David Reddick in the Pennsylvania Society for the Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, October 6, 1792, xv-j-446, Learned T. Bulman '48 Historic Archives and Museum at Washington and Jefferson College (hereafter HAMWJC); Robert Wallace Brewster, "The Rise of the Antislavery Movement in Southwestern Pennsylvania," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (March 1939), 6-8.

successful gubernatorial candidacy was 1844, in which he polled 2566 votes for 0.8% of the statewide total, and 289 in Washington County, or 3.7% of the local vote. Despite their organization and dedication, Pennsylvania's abolitionists were generally too weak to even be a spoiler in most state and local elections, but their high profile activism generated serious opposition, not only from Democrats, but from some Whigs, and later some Republicans as well. This was also the case locally, where LeMoyne and his fellow abolitionists, although few in number, helped inflame local public opinion on this sensitive issue long before the war, create demonstrable ill feeling in the process. For example, Judge Thomas H. Baird, a staunch Democrat, personally held LeMoyne in contempt for supporting a position that was, in the Judge's opinion, stirring up unnecessary sectional ill will.²³ By the 1850s, Underground Railroad operations were active in spots across the county, including Washington Borough, where LeMoyne allegedly used his own home as a safe-house for escaped slaves on numerous occasions, and it was this activity, perhaps more than their public lectures and hopelessly small political party that stirred public ire. In addition to their surreptitious activities, local abolitionists were also known to openly harass slave catchers when they passed through the county alone or with slaves being repatriated to their owners, sometimes at great risk to their persons and property.²⁴

The familiar national issues in the forefront during the 1850s naturally fomented intense debate and exacerbated existing local partisan rivalries. Washingtonians, like people across the country, were aware of the rising sectional tensions over slavery and related issues. Judge Thomas H. Baird, writing to his daughter Ellen during the debate over what became the

²³ Wilkes University Election Statistics Project: Pennsylvania Elections, 1682-2006, Gubernatorial Election Returns, <http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/gov/indexgov.html>; Ibid, House of Representatives Elections, <http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/rep/indexrep.html>.

²⁴ Crumrine, 261; *Washington Daily Reporter*, August 15, 1908.

Compromise of 1850, said “I am for compromise –not yielding the slavery question, but adjusting it upon fair and favorable terms. The omnibus bill I think does this to a reasonable extent. It is all we get unless we are prepared to drive matters to extremes.”²⁵ Baird also had a poor relationship with Washington’s leading abolitionist, Dr. Francis LeMoyne, dating to at least 1839, although their final split was apparently over Masonry rather than abolitionism. In a February 1840 letter to his son-in-law, Dr. Robert R. Reed, who lived just outside Washington Borough, Baird explained that the previous fall, LeMoyne “got affronted with me ...for saying that General Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Lafayette were as good men as he – although they were masons. He said it was false, or a lie, and I wrote him down as a fool and cut his acquaintance.”²⁶ Two years later, Baird again showed his distaste for LeMoyne in another letter to Robert Reed, noting that he “is out in my books. I have little confidence in him both as a man and as a physician.”²⁷

As in communities across the country in the 1850s, national issues like slavery and abolitionism, the Kansas controversies, presidential politics, and the Dred Scott decision, all played a significant role in keeping local politics on edge. The newspapers followed these events closely, offering frequent editorials and commentaries to provide their readers with appropriate partisan perspectives. For example, an editorial in the March 10, 1858 *Reporter* lambasted the Pennsylvania Democratic party for wedding itself firmly to slavery by endorsing candidates who favored the Lecompton constitution in Kansas. The editor then turned his attention to the

²⁵ Thomas H. Baird to Ellen Baird, June 26, 1850, Reed Collection, Folder 1, Thomas & Katherine Detre Library and Archives at the Senator John Heinz History Center (hereafter LASJHHC), Pittsburgh, PA.

²⁶ Thomas H. Baird to Robert R. Reed, February 12, 1840, Reed Collection, Folder 2, LASJHHC.

²⁷ Thomas H. Baird to Robert R. Reed, April 5, 1842, Reed Collection, Folder 2, LASJHHC.

Washington *Review*, one of two local Democratic newspapers, wondering if it had the courage to denounce the state party's pro-Lecompton platform.²⁸

Throughout the antebellum period, sharp conflict characterized borough and county politics, although it was not always strictly based on national issues or drawn neatly along party lines. Indeed, the single most pressing political issue across Washington County in the two years before the Civil War was not slavery, abolitionism, Kansas, the tariff, or any other national issue, but the highly controversial and unpopular county railroad tax levied to finance the interest on a bond issue whose proceeds had been used to purchase stock in the Hempfield Railroad. The railroad was supposed to run from Wheeling, Virginia, through Washington Borough, then eastward to Greensburg, Pennsylvania, in Westmoreland County, where it would link with the Pennsylvania Railroad. Work on the section between Washington Borough and Greensburg was abandoned in 1856, leaving much of Washington County entirely without the expected commercial benefits that the Hempfield Railroad was supposed to provide. The controversial so-called railroad tax generated intense political passions that are typically identified with late 1850s sectional conflict, but in this instance, the most pressing immediate pre-war issue was local and not strictly partisan, with Democrats and Republicans on both sides of the issue. Nevertheless, the railroad tax revolt stirred local emotions to a fevered pitch, and this emotional climate easily transitioned into the war years, where it continued to intensify. With a long tradition of partisan rivalry and with tempers already strained by the intense battles over issues ranging from the hated county railroad tax to the host of national controversies, Washington Borough and the wider county entered the Civil War with initial hopes of bipartisan unity, only to see it unravel in less than a year. In a sense, Washington fought two simultaneous wars, one against the Confederacy, and another against itself.

²⁸ *Washington Reporter*, March 10, 1858.

Chapter 7: From General Consensus to Major Conflict

Civil War scholarship has effectively flushed out the deep political divisions within both the Union and Confederacy, both in border regions and in deep within their respective sectional domains. Most scholarship on the Union's wartime dissension and political conflict focuses on the border-states, the butternut counties of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, or conspicuous urban centers like New York. Pennsylvania's internal political divisions have been studied and analyzed by historians whose focus has been primarily on the state's eastern and central regions, leaving Western Pennsylvania in relative obscurity. Arnold Shankman's groundbreaking book *The Anti-War Movement in Pennsylvania, 1861-1865*, Grace Palladino's *Another Civil War: Labor, Capital, and the State 1840-1868*, on the anthracite coal mining region, and more recently, Robert M. Sandow's *Deserter Country: Civil War Opposition in the Pennsylvania Appalachians*, an examination of the Appalachian lumber region in north-central Pennsylvania, all demonstrate significant pockets of anti-war, anti-Lincoln sentiments manifested themselves in open opposition to the war's conduct and objectives. J. Matthew Gallman's *Mastering Wartime: Philadelphia Fights the Civil War*, demonstrates significant political dissension and conflict in the Union's second-largest metropolis.¹

Although not studied nearly to the same extent as eastern and central Pennsylvania, the state's southwestern corner was also home to serious and sustained political rancor and opposition to the war, and Washington County was no exception, with heated rhetoric, widespread mutual loathing between Unionists and Copperheads, and even limited violence in some locales, including the county seat. Washington's deep and bitter political divisions

¹Arnold Shankman, *The Anti-War Movement in Pennsylvania, 1861-1865* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1980); *Another Civil War: Labor, Capital, and the State in the Anthracite Regions of Pennsylvania 1840-68* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990);, Robert M. Sandow, *Deserter County: Civil War Opposition in the Pennsylvania Appalachians* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009); J. Matthew Gallman, *Mastering Wartime: Philadelphia Fights the Civil War*.

demonstrate that scholarly discussions of Western Copperheads and so-called border regions should rightly include southwestern Pennsylvania. Washington County is on the state's western boundary with Virginia's (later West Virginia's) northern panhandle, and its southern boundary is only about 25 miles from the Mason-Dixon Line, making it a true geographic border area. Virginians and Marylanders formed the county's largest group of non-native Pennsylvanians, and Washington County had extensive economic ties to Virginia, mostly through the city of Wheeling; indeed, in 1861, the only local railroad ran from the county seat to Wheeling. In short, Virginia was an important factor in local political perceptions, and for Democrats in particular, the less conflict and discord with Virginia, the better, and this perhaps helped contribute to a history of tolerance towards slavery, at least in its already long established areas. The widespread local attitude of tolerance towards slavery's existence in its traditional geographic boundaries may be an example of what historian Robert Wiebe described as parallel development in the early Republic, in which Americans generally accepted that different regions could and would develop significantly different economic and social patterns without causing conflict with its neighbors; in short, the country was big enough to accommodate both North and South, free states and slave states.²

Geographical proximity, economic factors, and possible lingering empathy or kinship ties with the South among some Washingtonians were all ingredients in the local recipe for wartime political conflict, but they alone cannot account for the emergence of anti-war, anti-Lincoln, and Copperhead strength in Washington County. Perhaps the key ingredient in creating the strained, bitter, combative political environment across the county and in Washington borough itself lies with the entrenched antebellum political rivalries that the war exponentially intensified.

² Robert H. Wiebe, *The Opening of American Society: From the Adoption of the Constitution to the Eve of Disunion* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 287-290.

Copperhead sentiment could be found in all parts of the county, but the strongest anti-war, anti-Lincoln pockets were concentrated most heavily in the north and northwestern parts of the county, particularly in Cross Creek and adjacent townships, and in Washington Borough, the county seat. Election returns between the 1840's and 1860 show that areas with the most significant Copperhead reputations were staunchly and consistently Democratic in the antebellum period. Historian Eugene Roseboom argued in his work on Southern Ohio's wartime political divisions that entrenched antebellum party loyalty held firm during the war and was a far more significant factor in explaining the region's anti-war sentiments than lingering sectional loyalties to Dixie among Ohioans of southern parentage.³ This is true of southwestern Pennsylvania as well, and local Copperhead movements should be regarded primarily as exaggerated wartime expressions of preexisting political divisions, not hotbeds of southern sympathizers and traitors as contemporary Republicans claimed. Local Democrats remained staunchly loyal to their party, and their temporary alliance with Republicans to defend the Union had shallow roots that were easily disrupted. If there was such a thing as the *Spirit of '61*, in which the people of Washington County, Pennsylvania, stood united in their opposition to the rebellion, it certainly was fleeting.

The Republicans made major gains across western Pennsylvania, including Washington County, by the late 1850s. Republican regional support was rooted in its protectionist, pro-commercial, pro-industrial economic proposals and its determination to halt slavery's expansion in the Western territories. Although most abolitionists had gravitated to the Republican Party, they were a distinct minority, and local Republicans tended to be anti-slavery only to the extent of preventing slavery's expansion, and their anti-slavery politics flowed from economic self-

³ Eugene Roseboom, "Southern Ohio and the Union in 1863," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Vol 39, No. 1 (June 1952), 38- 41.

interest reasons rather than true abolitionist sentiment. For most western Pennsylvania Republicans and many Democrats as well, slavery was acceptable where it already existed, and only its future expansion was objectionable. In Washington County, Republicans turned out majorities for virtually all state and county offices in 1858 and 1859, putting the Democrats firmly in a defensive mindset as the new decade began.⁴

Republicans were again generally successful across western Pennsylvania in the 1860 elections, due mainly to its growing affinity for pro-industrial and commercial economic policies and a widespread desire for a final resolution of the conflict of slavery's status in the territories. The Republican surge in western Pennsylvania included Washington County, which produced majorities for Republican candidates for president, governor, and all county offices. Washington County was part of part of Pennsylvania's 20th Congressional district, along with the heavily Democratic Greene and Fayette counties, and although Washington gave a slight majority to Republican "Tariff Andy" Stewart, the district overall went to the Greene County Democrat, Jesse Lazear, by a nearly 1200-vote margin.⁵ Washington County's margins of Republican victory in the gubernatorial and presidential elections were 53.1% and 53.6%, respectively, but these vote totals do not reveal the whole situation. Republicans and Democrats were overall competitively balanced, but the county was pocketed by townships and boroughs holding heavily lop-sided partisan loyalties. For example, despite their national party divisions, Democrats still managed to poll majorities of 59% or greater in five townships, and Republicans duplicated the feat in thirteen townships and boroughs. Furthermore, raw numbers cannot reveal party loyalty and commitment, and despite their electoral minority status, local Democrats were still fully

⁴ C. Maxwell Myers, "The Influence of Western Pennsylvania in the Campaign of 1860," *Western Pennsylvania History*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1941), 229-230.

⁵ Wilkes University Election Statistics Project, House of Representatives Elections, <http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/rep/indexrep.html>.

wedded to their party despite its sectional divisions, and they were naturally determined to dethrone their Republican adversaries locally, statewide, and nationally. As always, partisan rancor continued in the weeks and months after the 1860 elections, and the recriminatory rhetoric in the winter months was only partially muted by the secession crisis's growing severity. The Washington borough newspapers continued their editorial sparring into early 1861, with the February 23, 1861 *Reporter-Tribune*, for example, excoriating its main Democratic rival, the *Examiner*, for its recent characterization of Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner as a "black-hearted malicious traitor who deserves the fate of John Brown" for his opposition to the Crittenden Compromise, inferring that the *Examiner's* editor, John R. Donehoo, a native of Cross Creek Township near the Virginia border, was a "weak brained, fanatical partisan."⁶

Only in April 1861, as the country rapidly veered towards war, did an overall sense of unity and singular purpose spread across Washington Borough and the wider county, if only briefly, as citizens prepared for the worst. An entry dated April 21, 1861 in the First Presbyterian Church's Sunday school ledger notes that "war feeling [is] pervading all ranks of the people," adding that Sunday school attendance had been adversely impacted. A follow-up on April 28 noted that the "intense excitement about the state of the country has interfered badly with attention to religious things," and an exasperated entry from May 19 complained of a total lack of interest in church affairs.⁷ On April 20, 1861, the borough hosted a countywide public meeting to demonstrate bipartisan support for the Union and Lincoln's efforts to subdue the rebellion. "Never before has our borough witnessed so enthusiastic and general an outpouring of the people, and upon so brief a notice," the *Reporter-Tribune* proudly noted, adding that "a universal sentiment of patriotism, aroused by the extraordinary events of the past few days,

⁶ "Washington *Reporter-Tribune*, February 28, 1861.

⁷ Sunday School Ledger 1852-1862, 217-218, 221. First Presbyterian Church of Washington Collection, Box A-52, Washington County Historical Society Archive (hereafter WCHSA), Washington, PA.

seemed to have inspired all, and driven them together, as by a common impulse.”⁸ The meeting featured speeches or brief remarks from many of the borough’s leading political figures, both Democratic and Republican, who had so recently been locked in partisan combat. Washington County’s recently retired U.S. congressman, Democrat William Montgomery, attended and spoke at length, offering unqualified support for the coming war effort to subdue the nascent Confederacy.⁹ William Hopkins, a prominent local Democrat who previously served in both the Pennsylvania Assembly and the U.S. Congress, was elected as the meeting’s president, and also spoke unreservedly in the Union’s defense, attaching blame for the war entirely on the Confederacy and making clear his support for the war effort then being organized. Hopkins opened his address to the assemblage by reminding them of the unprecedented emergency facing the nation, and that “whatever party spirit may have...hitherto divided us, the time has arrived when the love of party must yield to the love of country.” He added that all loyal citizens were duty-bound to work together in common cause to defend the Union’s integrity, and interestingly, Hopkins reminded his listeners that there were many Southerners who had not abandoned the Union in their hearts, and that they, too, were comrades in the quest to crush the rebellion. When assigning blame for the war, Hopkins declared that whatever the root causes might be, it was the South who had clear chosen disunion and war, which was an unpardonable alternative. The Confederacy, not Lincoln or the Republicans, were culpable for the current crisis.¹⁰ Hopkins’ remarks, and the fact that a local volunteer infantry company had been dubbed the *Hopkins Infantry* in his honor, and commanded by one of his own sons, left no doubt that he was a War

⁸ *Washington Reporter-Tribune*, April 25, 1861.

⁹ In 1861, Washington County was part of the 20th Pennsylvania Congressional District, which also included Greene and Beaver counties.

¹⁰ *Washington Reporter-Tribune*, April 25, 1861.

Democrat and Unionist, and the vast majority of borough and county Democrats were in full congruence.

Local Republicans also figured prominently at the April 20 meeting and were well-represented on its bipartisan list of official vice-presidents. The vice-presidents selected from around the county included Washington borough Republican attorneys Alexander W. Acheson and William McKennan (son of the late Thomas M.T. McKennan), merchant and businessman Colin M. Reed, and the patriarchal John Hoge Ewing, standing in common cause with local Democrat leaders, like John Grayson, former editor of the Democrat *Examiner* newspaper and current county judge, and Democrat attorney Adam Ecker.¹¹ Even some old intra-party rifts were apparently healed thanks to this meeting's overwhelming sense of unified purpose, as the elderly local physician and long-time Democrat, Dr. John Wishart, publicly ended his long, bitter feud with ex-Congressman Montgomery, although the source of their discord was not revealed in the meeting's newspaper account.¹²

The participation of local ministers in the meeting's proceedings without controversy is a more subtle but significant indicator of the meeting's unified and bipartisan spirit. Unless an issue had a direct moral and ethical dimension, such as temperance, education, or slavery, Washington's clergy were not normally directly involved in the accompanying political action. Even in these areas, many clergymen eschewed personal involvement if the issue was divisive and highly controversial, or had serious political ramifications, like slavery and abolition. Under normal circumstances, clergymen almost universally distanced themselves from secular partisanship's rough and tumble world, but amidst overwhelming public unity regarding the rebellion, there was little risk for clergy to enter the political arena's margins at this juncture.

¹¹ *Washington Reporter-Tribune*, April 25, 1861.

¹² *Ibid.* Dr. Wishart was also Alexander W. Acheson's father-in-law.

Indeed, as in communities across the Union and Confederacy alike, people looked to the clergy to add divine sanction to the upcoming war. For example, Rev. John Work Scott, president of Washington College, responded to the crowd's spontaneous invitation to speak, making his first known public political statement. After explaining that a clergyman's presence at a political meeting was excusable because of the dire circumstances to the nation as a whole, he insisted that the Union and Constitution stood in the right and in accordance with God, and therefore it was everyone's duty to do their utmost to suppress the rebellion. Scott tactfully concluded by revealing that privately he had always favored a compromise settlement, but the time for this hope had passed.¹³

Throughout the meeting, the participants stressed the secession's illegality and the need to defend the Union's integrity; slavery and abolition were studiously avoided as discussion points, lest it revive old divisions and detract from the prevailing spirit of unity. The meeting's bipartisan committee on resolutions proposed a series of statements meant to summarize the meeting's overall tenor, the most crucial of which affirmed secession's illegality, saddled the South with full responsibility for the war, and declared an end to political divisions between Democrats and Republicans in favor of a single-minded will to crush the rebellion and preserve the Union. After another round of brief bipartisan speeches, the resolutions were specifically endorsed by Rev. James Irwin Brownson of the First Presbyterian church, and approved by the assembled citizenry in unanimous acclamation.¹⁴ The meeting ended in another affirmation of the bipartisan spirit when William McKennan, chairman of the resolutions committee, moved to adjourn with three cheers for the Union, which was enthusiastically agreed upon by all. With the crowd still assembled, and not to be outdone, local stone mason and leading Democrat Andrew

¹³ *Washington Reporter-Tribune*, April 25, 1861.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Brady, whose brother Benjamin would later be a prominent local Copperhead, offered three cheers for the local volunteers then preparing to depart for Pittsburgh.¹⁵

In addition to the outpouring of bipartisan Unionist sentiment at the April 20 county meeting, other signs of local unity behind the war could be found in public actions and proclamations as well as private correspondence. On April 25, 1861, the *Reporter-Tribune* proudly noted that volunteer companies and home guard units were being formed all across the county, including cavalry units, which would, the editors noted, be useful for scouting purposes in the event that rebel forces crossed into Washington County.¹⁶ Although no Confederate forces ever crossed into Washington County, the *Reporter-Tribune's* remark about the possibility of invasion reveals an issue that the populace could not ignore. The county's proximity to Virginia could not help but create a certain sense of anxiety in the war's initial uncertain months, when virtually anything seemed possible, and the latent fear of invasion may have been a contributing factor to the overall sense of local unity as the war began. In May, the same newspaper noted that local Judge John Gilmore, a lifelong Democrat and frequent partisan, had recently said to the sitting grand jury that all patriotic citizens had a duty to sustain the Federal government, regardless of political affiliation.¹⁷ To people accustomed to fierce political warfare, the many expressions of harmony and unity from political, judicial, and social leaders represented a noticeable departure from antebellum rancor and discord. Even retired Judge Thomas H. Baird, a long-time Democrat, anti-abolitionist, and no friend to the Republican Party, lamented his old age frailty in a September 6, 1861 letter to his daughter, Ellen Baird Reed, noting that "...I am utterly useless as to any aid I could render in allaying the public ills." Indeed, Baird had already expressed grave concerns about the war in a July 27, 1861 letter to his daughter Ellen Reed,

¹⁵ *Washington Reporter-Tribune*, April 25, 1861.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, April 25, 1861.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, May 23, 1861.

writing that, “I wish I could feel...confidence in the result to our country, of this disastrous struggle. Although this insurrection may be soon suppressed, as I hope it will, yet I doubt very much whether we will again form a united prosperous nation. At all events, I do not expect soon to see it as it once was.” Baird’s post- Bull Run trepidation was common across the north, and it transcended party loyalties and reflected an underlying loyalty to the Constitution and Union. For the old judge, as with the majority of Washington County’s Democrats and Republicans in mid-1861, the Union’s integrity was paramount, and party divisions were made irrelevant by the crisis, at least for the moment.¹⁸

Despite an early prevailing sense of bipartisan unity, there were signs of political discord in Washington County as early as spring 1861, and by the 1862, significant pockets of dissent, discord, and intense partisan rancor had emerged. Throughout the war’s remaining time, Democrats grew increasingly divided on the war, with an emergent Copperhead wing pitted against the pro-war faction, who maintained common cause with the Republicans. In an already emotionally excited environment, the growing Democratic anti-war movement’s heated rhetoric and constant opposition to the administration sometimes made them appear to be outright southern sympathizers to Republicans and War Democrat allies. Indeed, by late 1861, and certainly by early 1862, the *Reporter-Tribune* was in frequent open conflict with the borough’s two Democrat newspapers, the *Examiner* and the *Review*, and the early bipartisan cooperative spirit quickly evaporated, replaced by deep acrimony, division, and sometimes violence.

During late spring and summer 1861, the long-time Democratic stronghold of Cross Creek Township in the county’s northwestern lands was already gaining notoriety for its anti-Republican, anti-Lincoln, and anti-war rhetoric and activities. In May, there were reports of so-

¹⁸ Thomas H. Baird to Ellen Baird Reed, September 6, 1861, Reed Collection, Folder 1, Thomas & Katherine Detre Library and Archives at the Senator John Heinz History Center (hereafter LASJHHC), Pittsburgh, PA; Thomas H. Baird to Ellen Baird Reed, July 27, 1861, Reed Collection, Folder 1, LASJHHC.

called southern sympathizers in some western and northwestern townships, particularly in Cross Creek, publicly applauding Jefferson Davis and harassing local Unionists. The next overt anti-war incident to make local news was revealed in a letter to the editor in the May 19, 1861, *Reporter-Tribune*, in which an anonymous writer asserted that as a Union pole and flag was raised in Cross Creek Village, one local man angrily shouted that he would “never gulp down the Chicago platform,” and then began to shout out his support for Jefferson Davis. The writer made further reference to similar disloyal acts and attitudes in Cross Creek Village and the wider Township, denouncing them as the new equivalent of Loyalists in the American Revolution.¹⁹ That summer, an unofficial meeting was held in Cross Creek Village in which resolutions were adopted denouncing Republicans and Lincoln’s War.²⁰

More significantly than these initial informal protests was an official meeting held by Cross Creek Township’s Democrats on June 8, 1861, a full six weeks before the Union’s first major battlefield setback at Bull Run. The assemblage presaged later Copperhead arguments when it blamed the Republicans for secession and war because of its support for abolitionism, and adopted resolutions that denounced the efficacy of subjugating the rebellion by force, called upon all Democrats to vote exclusively for Democratic candidates in future elections, and vowed to “prevent any attempt by the Republicans in power to subjugate the Southern States” and to seek reunion through peaceable means.²¹ *Reporter-Tribune* editors William S. Moore and William Swan vociferously protested the meeting and its resolutions, stating that they had previously noted “unmistakable tokens of disloyalty” in the Cross Creek area, but had chalked up to the actions of a few fanatics. Now, the Republican editors continued, “when we find the acknowledged leaders of the Democratic party in that locality, making themselves parties to what

¹⁹ *Washington Reporter-Tribune*, May 19, 1861.

²⁰ *Ibid*, May 28, 1861; *Ibid*, June 5, 1861; *Ibid*, June 13, 1861.

²¹ *Ibid*, June 13, 1861.

is none else than misprision of treason, we can no longer remain passive, but must...denounce the attitude assumed by these men as traitorous and as lending aid and comfort to the enemy.”²²

The war was barely seven weeks old, and accusations of treason were already in the public discourse, hardly an encouraging sign to those who hoped partisanship would remain shelved for the duration.

In August 1861, the Cross Creek Democrats took their opposition a step further holding another meeting, at which they expressed their belief that the Union could be saved only by preventing a full scale war, declaring that “we will, by all proper and legitimate means, oppose...and prevent any attempt...of the Republicans in power to subjugate the South.”²³ The sentiments and resolutions expressed at these meetings in Cross Creek Township between May and August 1861 meet historian Arnold Shankman’s definition of Copperhead politics.

Shankman describes mainstream Copperheads as individuals or groups actively and earnestly opposed the Lincoln administration, its war effort, and Republican policies, but without traitorous loyalty to, or sympathy for the rebellion. Although Republicans naturally interpreted such criticism as disloyalty, Copperheads were defending their traditional ideological understanding of the Constitution and presidential powers, albeit in a highly emotional wartime context. Shankman concedes that a radical fringe element nested among Pennsylvania’s Copperheads, who pushed their rhetoric up to, or even beyond treason’s demarcation line, inevitably tainting the moderate majority, but he does not associate the mainstream Copperheads with treason or sympathy for the Confederacy.²⁴ The resolutions passed at the Cross Creek meeting, while not endorsing the Confederacy, clearly saw the Lincoln administration’s efforts to restore the Union by military force as the greatest threat to the Constitution and the Republic.

²² *Washington Reporter-Tribune*, June 13, 1861.

²³ *Ibid*, August 29, 1861.

²⁴ Shankman, *Pennsylvania Anti-war Movement 1861-1865*, 13-17.

Further, they recognized as legitimate the South's rationale for secession and blamed Republican extremism for provoking secession and the war in the first place.²⁵ Indeed, the voices of criticism and opposition from Cross Creek and other adjacent townships were significant enough for the *Reporter-Tribune* to speculate in late November 1861 that the Knights of the Golden Circle were already entrenched there.²⁶

Washington Borough and the wider county maintained an overall united front in the summer and fall of 1861 despite the grumblings from Cross Creek Township and some neighboring northern townships. The Republican electoral slate in 1861 was again largely successful in the final countywide tallies for state and county offices, but the election also demonstrated that partisanship could not be fully contained. Republicans captured all the county's seats in the state legislature except for one, which went to former speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and ex-U.S. Congressman, William Hopkins, who won because his solid local reputation, previous experience, and support for the war meshed well with the prevailing bi-partisan local sentiment, netting him enough Republican cross-over votes to prevail.

Hopkins continued to count himself among the War Democrats as he entered the state house of representatives in 1862, but his insistence upon an ad hoc investigatory committee to probe possible misconduct in the previous year's repeal of the state tonnage tax, and his subsequent appointment as chairman of that committee, seemed to at least some Republicans back in Washington as a betrayal. The Republican partisan reaction is captured in a letter to the editor under the pseudonym "Buffalo" in the February 6, 1862 *Reporter-Tribune*, which complained that "...Hopkins admits that he was indebted for his election to...Republicans. He

²⁵ *Reporter-Tribune*, August 29, 1861.

²⁶ *Ibid*, November 21, 1861.

could not have been elected without their aid; but little did they dream, in light of his loyal professions, that his first effort...would have been to become the official leader of a party whose object is secretly to destroy the prestige of the national government....”²⁷ Despite *Buffalo*’s accusations, Hopkins was still at this point a War Democrat, as his continued appearance at Unionist meetings in Washington and his chairmanship of a countywide soldiers’ relief organization during the spring and summer of 1862 evidence. Indeed, Hopkins even served on the resolutions committee with the staunchly pro-war Republican Alexander W. Acheson at an August 7, 1862 county war meeting, and the resolutions they submitted to the assemblage were all thoroughly pro-war, pro-Union, and supportive of Lincoln. Had Hopkins expressed serious opposition to these resolutions, the *Reporter-Tribune* surely would have savaged him for doing so. But in the increasingly emotional and tense political climate, it is understandable that *Buffalo* could interpret Hopkins’ anti-corruption committee as an attack on Republican integrity in Harrisburg. By late 1862, however, Hopkins would shift to the Peace Democrats and become one of the most prominent Copperhead targets in the *Reporter-Tribune*.²⁸

The second divisive aspect arising from the 1861 elections regarded the soldiers’ vote. Washington County soldiers voted through an ad hoc absentee balloting effort, but after the election, thirty local Democrat activists, including some from the Cross Creek area, as well as several leading party activists from Washington Borough, including town councilmen Alexander Frazier and Andrew Brady, and Washington *Examiner* editor John R. Donehoo, filed suit in the state courts in support of narrowly defeated Democratic associate judge candidate, Thomas McCarroll, seeking to have the soldiers’ votes stricken from the official total. If successful, this would give McCarroll a majority and overturn the election of his Republican rival. McCarroll’s

²⁷ *Reporter-Tribune*, February 6, 1862.

²⁸ *Ibid*, June 26, 1862; *Ibid*, August 14, 1862.

supporters contended that technically the very Act of Assembly which authorized soldier voting was unconstitutional, that soldiers who mustered into service in western Virginia were no longer eligible to vote in Pennsylvania, and that the men in the 85th Pennsylvania Infantry regiment, a large portion of whom were Washingtonians, had not been properly mustered into service at the time of the election, and were thus also disqualified.²⁹ Although victorious in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in the spring of 1862, their decision to challenge the soldier vote merely added another emotional issue to divide the community and exacerbate partisan rivalry and mistrust. One angry letter to the editor anonymously signed “A Lover of the Soldiers,” appeared in the June 12, 1862 *Reporter-Tribune* and excoriated the local Democrat party for putting political objectives ahead of its patriotic duty to honor the ballots cast by men in the army. “It is immaterial whether [the soldiers] were Democrat or Republican – they were citizens, and became soldiers, and they went into the army under the full assurance of the law, that their votes should be received and counted, and that although absent in camp...they were still citizens and voters in their own native county.”³⁰ The price of obtaining a single county judgeship was enmity and bitterness from many local Republicans and perhaps even some Democrats who favored bi-partisan cooperation over the addition of a single Democrat judge at such a high cost.

Several factors simultaneously contributed to the open political breach in 1862 between Republicans and their War Democrat allies on the one hand, and a growing anti-war Democratic faction on the other. The most significant were the endurance of antebellum political rivalries in a highly emotional wartime context, the war’s rising intensity coupled with a string of major defeats and lost opportunities, emancipation issues, civil liberties concerns, and conscription. As

²⁹ *Reporter-Tribune*, November 21, 1861; Ibid, June 12, 1862.

³⁰ Ibid, June 12, 1862.

these factors imposed themselves on local society and politics, the familiar pattern of inter-party warfare returned with a vengeance and continued throughout the war's duration.

Routine rhetorical dueling between the Republican *Reporter-Tribune* and its Democratic rivals, the *Examiner* and the *Review*, in full renaissance by early 1862, was one of the most visible indicators that local unity was collapsing, and the *Reporter-Tribune's* editorial commentaries reveal many essential conflict points. The May 15, 1862 issue re-published an article from the Charleston (SC) *Mercury* which cited a recent editorial from the Washington (PA) *Examiner* as proof that the North had become hopelessly divided and incapable of winning the war. The *Mercury* editor had used the *Examiner* article to express their continued faith that northern Democrats were still their allies and as much the enemies of Lincoln and the Republicans as any Confederate. The *Mercury* argued that the Washington *Examiner* offered distinct hope that the Union was fatally divided internally, and that it would require “only one great reverse to their arms to bring the Yankees to their marrow-bones.”³¹ Part of an *Examiner* editorial was directly reprinted by the *Mercury*, and subsequently in the *Reporter-Tribune*, offering a rare direct look at the *Examiner's* editor, John Donehoo, in his own words. Entitled “Moral of the Democratic Victories,” Donehoo put forth four of the main arguments that would soon characterize local Copperhead sentiment by blaming the Republicans for causing the war, conducting it with incompetence, gross financial mismanagement, and unconstitutional despotism. Because Lincoln and the Republicans were a direct threat to the Constitution, stability, and future prosperity, Donehoo reasoned, people were flocking increasingly to the Democrats.³²

³¹ *Washington Reporter-Tribune*, May 15, 1862.

³² *Ibid.* Portions of the *Washington Examiner* editorial were reprinted in this edition.

Emancipation's growing presence as a national debate, particularly by spring and summer 1862, had a significant impact on local politics, not only with the direct question of slavery's legal future, but the broader issue of emancipation's economic and social ramifications. Even before the Second Confiscation Act's passage in July 1862, and well before Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, slave emancipation was a growing point of contention in the local newspaper war. The May 15, 1862 *Reporter-Tribune* took the *Examiner* to task for its recent assertion that Pennsylvania and other northern states would be deluged by freed slaves if emancipation were to go forward in the Union slave states, particularly Maryland. Pointing out the presence of large numbers of free blacks in Maryland and other slave states for decades, why had not even a trace of such a flood of black migrants already occurred? The *Reporter* smugly added that the slave states in the Union were fully within their rights to abolish it within their borders of their own free will, regardless of the *Examiner's* opinions.³³ In the same issue, the *Reporter-Tribune* editor's systematic refutation of their chief Democratic rival attacked another statement recently published in the *Examiner* that asserted that Congress had "passed one abolition measure after another – laws for the emancipation of slavery in all the Southern states."³⁴ The *Reporter* sternly reminded its readers that no such laws had been passed, and charged that the *Examiner's* Donehoo had sunk to a new low by making deliberately false statements. Launching a direct personal attack, the *Reporter* editors declared that "such shameless falsifications as this may serve admirably to exhibit the depravity of the writer, but it can deceive no intelligent reader."³⁵ Just as the military campaigns in Virginia intensified in the late spring and summer of 1862, so did the exchange of rhetorical fire in Washington, Pennsylvania.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid, May 15, 1862.

A letter to the editors under the pseudonym “Aliquis” was published in the June 19, 1862, *Reporter-Tribune* which attacked the *Washington Review* for alleged misrepresentations on taxation, unfounded accusations of Republican financial malfeasance, false charges of corruption in Governor Curtin’s administration, and its long-standing opposition to efforts in Wheeling to form a “loyal government in Virginia.” While conceding the need for honest criticism, “Aliquis” condemned the *Review* as a “disgrace to the party you represent, and...many of your readers in this county...do not fail to see it.”³⁶ It is interesting that despite obvious frustration and anger, “Aliquis” nevertheless closed his argument by drawing a line of distinction between obstructionist, unpatriotic, possibly traitorous Democrats, and honorable, patriotic War Democrats.

As news of Lincoln’s July 1862 call for 300,000 additional troops reached Washington County, there was decidedly less fanfare involved with enlistment than a year earlier. A few new companies were raised, but the flow of recruits had dropped considerably from the heady days of early 1861, as was the case in countless communities, both large and small, across the Union states.³⁷ David Acheson, son of prominent Republican attorney and future judge, Alexander W. Acheson, took the lead in raising an infantry company in late July 1862, which soon became Company C in the 140th Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment. In an October 12, 1862 letter to his father, Acheson hinted at enlistment’s increasingly politicized nature that previous summer, as well as his own changing attitudes since then, stating “they called me an abolitionist at home

³⁶ Ibid, June 19, 1862.

³⁷ Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln’s Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 50.

before I came into the army. They were wrong then. Now the name would be quite appropriate.”³⁸

Even before the war, the local Democratic press had attached the abolitionist label to the Republicans, but as the conflict intensified in the spring and summer of 1862, and the emancipation debate assumed greater weight, local tensions on emancipation and racial issues deepened as well, and in the local Democratic press and among Democrats critical of the war, there was no practical difference between a Republican and an abolitionist, and they increasingly cast the war in terms of a misguided, or sometimes nefarious, effort to abolish slavery and introduce racial equality and amalgamation. A *Reporter-Tribune* editorial from September 11, 1862 illustrates some of the battle lines, with the Republican editors attacking the *Examiner's* alleged misrepresentation of emancipation issues. According to the *Reporter*, the *Examiner* was recently floating two false assumptions, namely that emancipation would result in a flood of freedmen entering the northern states, and that emancipation would pervert the war into one in which white men were essentially fighting for “negro equality” rather than to preserve the Union. The choice facing northerners was clear to the *Reporter* editors; the Union’s only acceptable alternative in the current crisis was the Confederacy’s total subjugation and defeat, and disrupting slavery was useful in achieving that goal. Why, the editors asked, would masses of freedmen suddenly leave their families and community networks just because they were no longer enslaved? Large free black populations already existed in the South, and black labor would still be in high demand there. To the *Reporter's* editors, it was wholly appropriate to confiscate and emancipate rebels’ slaves, and perhaps even those owned by loyal citizens, with compensation for loyal slave-owners, and any suggestion that slave emancipation must result in

³⁸ David Acheson to Alexander W. Acheson, October 12, 1862, ed. Jane M Fulcher, *Family Letters in a Civil War Century: Achesons, Wilsons, Brownsons, Wisharts, and Others of Washington, Pennsylvania* (Avella, PA: Privately published, 1986), 360.

racial equality was preposterous. Finally, the *Reporter* argued that pursuing emancipation would also pay foreign policy dividends relative to the European powers and make their intervention much less likely.³⁹ Despite the *Reporter-Tribune*'s arguments in favor of emancipation based on the war's necessities, many Democrats remained staunchly opposed to any sort of emancipation, and the strains on local political unity continued to feel the cumulative impact of increasingly divergent views on this crucial issue. When Lincoln announced his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation after the Battle of Antietam, the *Reporter-Tribune* unreservedly applauded the president's action; slavery was the root cause of secession and rebellion, and "...either slavery or the Republic must perish." For the *Reporter-Tribune*, the emancipating of rebels' slaves was not only appropriate, but should have been done much earlier.⁴⁰

The sluggish response across the North in the summer of 1862 to Lincoln's call for additional troops spurred the first serious potential for conscription, and as the battlefield situation continued to deteriorate, anti-war forces continued to gain momentum, and the draft quickly became another partisan controversy. As historian Grace Palladino notes, the notion of a draft was intended to both encourage citizens to do their duty and demonstrate the state's power with its ability to enforce conscription, although in practice it was often perceived as a threat to "long-cherished notions of popular sovereignty and personal autonomy that even war had not displaced."⁴¹ An enrollment report for Washington County in August 1862 shows that there was at least some correlation between party dominance and volunteer enlistment rates in the several townships and boroughs. In August 1862, of the 8076 white men of military age in Washington County, a total of 2127, or 26.3%, had already volunteered. Party strongholds, both Democratic and Republican, showed some tendencies of enlistment rates that mirrored their dominant

³⁹ *Reporter-Tribune*, September 11, 1862.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, September 25, 1862.

⁴¹ Grace Palladino, *Another Civil War*, 95-96.

political beliefs. Using the 1860 congressional race as a bellwether of party loyalty on the eve of war, some patterns emerge. Democratic strongholds were more likely to have enlistment rates significantly lower than the county average, but it was not a universal condition. The Democratic strongholds of Cross Creek, Jefferson, Morris, Nottingham, and South Strabane townships all had enlistment rates between 11-15%, whereas Nottingham Township, with a 76.9% Democratic majority in the 1860 congressional race, and Washington Borough, which went 59.7% Democratic, both had enlistment rates slightly higher than the county average. Conversely, Republican strongholds had a somewhat higher propensity for volunteering, although some of them had rates lower than the county average. For example, Chartiers, East Bethlehem, Franklin, and Somerset townships all polled over 60% Republican in the 1860 congressional contest, but all had enlistment rates between three to seven percentage points lower than the county average. Union Township, however, with a 65% Republican majority, saw an enormous 56.9% of its eligible men volunteer by the summer of 1862. Although there is some significant variance, the most stridently Democratic districts tended to have lower enlistment rates than staunch Republican areas. It is more likely that most military-age Democrats who chose not to volunteer did so for some combination of economic and political reasons rather than lack of patriotism or sense of duty.⁴²

If many Democrats were unwilling in mid-1862 to serve under Republican political leadership for the narrow goal of preserving the Union with an all-volunteer army, their decision was unlikely to be changed by the Emancipation Proclamation, the introduction of conscription, and continued battlefield blunders and missed opportunities. More evidence of lagging interest in military service by late summer 1862 is provided by General Lee's Maryland invasion. With Lee's army crossing into Maryland, Pennsylvania's Governor Andrew Curtin sent out a call for

⁴² *Reporter-Tribune*, November 22, 1862; *Ibid*, September 4, 1862.

the immediate statewide formation of emergency militia units. With the most enthusiastic or willing men already in uniform, insufficient numbers of able-bodied young men responded to the call, leaving middle-aged, and in some cases elderly men to round out the ranks. In Washington Borough, veterans who were home on furlough or convalescing, along with anyone with previous militia experience, were pressed into emergency service to help organize two companies for the 6th Pennsylvania Regiment of Militia for deployment to a Union fallback position at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. The 66-year-old town elder, John Hoge Ewing, once a major in the Pennsylvania militia, took command as captain of Company F, leading borough luminaries like merchant and Franklin Bank president Colin M. Reed, Drs. Alfred Creigh and Thomas McKennan, Jr., Washington College president Reverend John W. Scott, attorney and Hempfield Railroad president Joseph Henderson, and William W. Smith, a local private banker and personal friend and sometimes civilian aid-de-camp to General Ulysses Grant.⁴³ Although many men in Company F far exceeded the average soldier's age, all survived their two-week stint in Chambersburg without incidence of disease or serious injury, returning safely to Washington Borough at the beginning of October.⁴⁴

The *Reporter-Tribune* praised these men as heroes, but David Acheson, now captain of Company C in the 140th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry, was not impressed that so many older men, like Ewing, Reed, Henderson, and Scott, had volunteered for emergency militia duty while many men of combat age refused. In a letter to his mother on September 16, 1862, Acheson noted that “we heard yesterday that Dr. Creigh’s company was in Harrisburg –Dr. and Colin

⁴³ Boyd Crumrine, *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania, With Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: H.L. Everts & Co., 1882), 363-64.

⁴⁴ *Reporter-Tribune*, October 12, 1862.

Reed and Mr. Henderson as privates. What foolishness. Such men will not be able to enter the service. Where are the young men of Washington? Shame on them.”⁴⁵

If many of the borough and county’s military-age men were reluctant to volunteer, then the Harrisburg authorities were authorized under the federal Militia Act of July 17, 1862, to compel them. The first serious steps towards a draft were taken in August 1862, when Washington Borough attorney Alexander Murdoch, a Republican, was appointed enrollment marshal for the county. Murdoch tapped county clerk of courts David Aiken, also a Republican, as his assistant, and the two immediately began selecting enrollment assistants for each township and borough to determine the number of eligible able-bodied white men of military age and the number of volunteers already furnished, so that any draft could be more equitable.⁴⁶

Coupled with the debate over emancipation and slavery’s fate, the possibility of a draft added more fuel to the already burning partisan fires across the county and its capital, Washington Borough. Even before the draft took place, its opponents, most likely predominantly Democrats, were loud enough to catch the attention of soldiers in the field. Washington County native Bishop Crumrine, then serving as a sergeant with the Pittsburgh Heavy Artillery at Fort Delaware on the Chesapeake Bay, in an August 25, 1862 letter to his brother, Washington Borough attorney Boyd Crumrine, warned “I think Washington County had better keep quiet about the draft or she will have a brigade or two of old soldiers there soon, as Columbiana County has. I should hate to be sent home with arms to fight my neighbors, but just as sure as they resist the draft, something of that kind will occur. The soldiers think those at home have as good right to do their duty as anyone. They will enforce the law with a good will.

⁴⁵ David Acheson to Mary Wilson Acheson, September 16, 1862, ed. Fulcher, *Family Letters in a Civil War Century*, 356.

⁴⁶ *Reporter-Tribune*, August 21, 1862.

Do you think the people are foolish enough to come into contact with a million of tried soldiers?”⁴⁷

On October 16, the first draft was held at the county courthouse as an anxious crowd looked on while 295 names were drawn by lottery and announced. Although the draft tended to hit the some of the heavy Democratic townships hardest, some men were also drafted from Republican strongholds, such as Cecil Township, in which the enlistment rate was actually slightly higher than the county wide average. Many drafted men responded by hiring for a substitute to take their place. In the week after the draft lottery, the *Reporter-Tribune* noted there was a “brisk business in the way of procuring substitutes....,” adding that the going rate had risen from about \$200 to \$500, and that they expected half the drafted men to hire an alternate to take their place.⁴⁸ Some men, instead of hiring substitutes, simply refused to report and prepared to resist forcefully if necessary, with confrontations, apparently nonviolent, between draftees and enrollment officials erupting by December 1862.⁴⁹

Despite growing differences and conflicts on a variety of issues, local Unionists continued with their efforts to promote political unity and singular purpose in pursuit of victory. Throughout the summer and into the autumn, “war meetings” were still held around the county, including Washington Borough. On August 8, 1862, a bi-partisan Unionist meeting was held in the county seat with the object of promoting a “no party” attitude and keeping local energies focused on the rebellion’s defeat. Unlike the first county Union meeting in Washington Borough in 1861, this meeting’s official resolutions did not include direct denunciations of the Confederacy, but defensively focused on expressing support for the Lincoln administration’s

⁴⁷ Bishop Crumrine to Boyd Crumrine, August 25, 1862, Bishop Crumrine Letters, xv-c-32, Learned T. Bulman ’48 Historical Archive & Museum at Washington and Jefferson College (hereafter HAMWJC), Washington, PA.

⁴⁸ *Reporter-Tribune*, October 23, 1862.

⁴⁹ Frances Elizabeth Marvin, “Washington County in the Civil War” (master’s thesis, Pennsylvania State College, 1933), HIST. COLL 974.882 M368, HAMWJC.

recent call for additional troops, urging their fellow citizens to overcome their political differences, noting their approbation of the local men who had hitherto volunteered for the army, expressing their appreciation of those who had died or been wounded in the line of duty, and a plan to establish a fund to assist new volunteers in meeting expenses incurred in entering the military services. It is noteworthy that Democratic state representative William Hopkins, already being accused by some of disloyalty and lack of patriotism, was present at the meeting as one of its vice-presidents, although his role seemed entirely passive, in contrast to his central role at the first Union meeting in 1861. The *Reporter-Tribune* does not mention any Hopkins speech or other contribution to the meeting's proceeding, which it surely would have done given his local stature and the fact that he sat in the state legislature. Also present were Washington Borough residents and future Copperheads Andrew Brady and Alexander Wishart, the latter of whom had been captain of Company K in the 8th Pennsylvania Volunteer Reserves and seriously wounded in the cheek at the Battle of Gaines' Mill, Virginia, on June 27, 1862. At this point, whatever criticisms they may have had about Lincoln, the Republicans, and the war, they had not yet assumed large enough proportions to turn them against the effort itself.⁵⁰

As the fall elections approached, Washington borough and the surrounding county was gripped in conflict, both with the war against the Confederacy and the divisiveness at home. The widespread public anxiety was even apparent in a letter from U.S. Senator Edgar Cowan of Pennsylvania to William McKennan, a Washington Borough attorney and son of the late Thomas M.T. McKennan. "We are defective and weak at all points –government, army, and people are in bad shape," Cowan complained. "The first is weak and resorts to marital law – the second is a democratic mob in uniform...-- the last is playing politics and ready for civil war." Mired in pessimism, Cowan added that "the war at this instant is rather between the abolitionists and the

⁵⁰ *Reporter-Tribune*, August 14, 1862.

Democrats than between the North and South. They hate each other so intensely that they are ready for anything.” Revealing his own exasperation with radical abolitionists and the political troubles that surrounded them, Cowan added that “everybody says ‘put down the Rebellion,’ but a very few say put down slavery too. Still those few have usurped our party....”⁵¹

The 1862 midterm elections were a setback for Republicans, both nationally and locally, compared to results since the late 1850s, revealing their precarious position. In 1860, local Republicans turned out majorities for all state and county offices, as well as the presidential and congressional contests. But in 1862, traditionally Democratic-leaning townships and boroughs predictably tended to extend their majorities, while most Republican districts saw their majorities shrink, or in some cases completely evaporate. For example, long-time Democratic stronghold Cross Creek Township polled 55.1% Democratic in the 1860 congressional race, but increased it to 68.8% in 1862, while the Buffalo, Amwell, and Donegal townships, all of which had slim Republican majorities in 1860, turned to the Democrats two years later. Fallowfield Township, which provided the Republicans with a respectable 55.5% majority in 1860, completely reversed itself in 1862, giving the Democrats 56%. Some local Republican strongholds did not significantly waver in 1862, but overall the party saw its fortunes badly eroded.⁵²

As the Democrats took heart from their midterm election gains, Republicans were naturally confounded, frustrated, anxious, and eager to reverse their faltering position. As the extent of the Republican setbacks across the North became apparent, the *Reporter-Tribune* offered hope to the forlorn while at the same launching a renewed partisan attack with an oblique reference to soldier disenfranchisement. “Let the friends of the Union...not despair of the Republic. It is not the first time that the enemies of the Government have been enabled to win a

⁵¹ (U.S. Senator) Edgar Cowan to William McKennan, undated but sometime in early fall 1862, McKennan Collection, Box A-12, WCHSA.

⁵² *Washington Reporter-Tribune*, October 18, 1860; Ibid, October 23, 1862.

temporary triumph owing to the absence of its friends on the field of battle.”⁵³ The fact that the editors chose to label the Democrat party “enemies of the Government” clearly demonstrates the acrimonious atmosphere that had emerged and worsened since 1861. A month later, the *Reporter-Tribune* published the unofficial election results for Congress and the state house of representatives from the four Washington County companies in the 140th Pennsylvania Infantry, encamped at Parkton, Maryland. The tallies showed decided Republican majorities, and the *Reporter-Tribune* concluded from these results that if all the state’s soldiers had been allowed to officially vote, the election results would have been markedly different. In a statement obviously intended to sully the Democrats, the *Reporter-Tribune* editors charged that Democratic ballot-box victories were only possible because “our brave boys in the field had to be disenfranchised....”⁵⁴

Senator Cowan, writing again to William McKennan shortly after the election, did his best to put a positive spin on Republican setbacks in Congress, explaining that “I don’t consider the elections against us – our majority in Congress was our ruin, as it enabled the worst to lead and compelled wise and true men to follow, even against their judgment. A few more Democrats therefore will not hurt. All I want is a working majority.”⁵⁵ David Acheson (not to be confused with his nephew, Captain David Acheson), writing to his elder brother, attorney Alexander W. Acheson, from Fairfield, Iowa, on December 7, was much less sanguine about the Union’s affairs and frustrated arms. “We are getting sick—indeed I might say tired – of this polite war, for it has on the side of the Government not been anything else but a polished and genteel passage at arms,” Acheson explained before blaming General George McClellan, a Democrat,

⁵³ *Reporter-Tribune*, October 23, 1862.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, October 27, 1862.

⁵⁵ (U.S. Senator) Edgar Cowan to William McKennan, undated but shortly after 1862 election, McKennan Collection, Box A-12, WCHS Archive

for fumbling and prolonging the war. “It seemed to us that [McClellan] let the opportunity pass by on more than one occasion when he might have stricken the rebellion down, or at least shortened its life. I am gratified to know that John [Wishart Acheson] thinks as we have..., and that our estimate of the ‘Young Napoleon’ finds a response in one of his soldiers.”⁵⁶ At 1862’s close, partisanship on both sides was a powerful, divisive force that seemed to define Washington’s politics, and the situation was to become even more strained as the war dragged on interminably.

⁵⁶ David Acheson to Alexander W. Acheson, December 7, 1862, ed. Fulcher, *Family Letters in a Civil War Century*, 364. John Wishart Acheson was another of Alexander W. Acheson’s sons then in the Union army.

Chapter 8: Open Wounds at Home

With political acrimony and dissension gaining momentum across the North and Union armies fumbling and stumbling on the battlefield, Sergeant Bishop Crumrine, still stationed at Fort Delaware, was despondent about the war and the country's future. Writing to his brother Boyd in January 1863, he dejectedly said, "I expect this Union to split into about three confederacies within the next year, and then what will become of the soldiers in our army?"¹ If political division had been exacerbated in 1862 by the war's rising human and financial costs, the many serious battlefield setbacks, and controversial acts like conscription and emancipation, 1863 was even worse. Emboldened by relative electoral success in the 1862 elections, war-skeptic Democrats intensified their partisan attacks, prompting an equally strident response from Republicans and their War Democrat allies.

Although the term "Copperhead" was not part of regular discourse until early 1863, their main points had already emerged in 1861-1862 and were afterwards merely expounded upon, refined, and applied to changing circumstances as they emerged. The resolutions adopted at the Democratic county convention in Washington Borough on February 10, 1863, outline the main points held among the county's oppositional Copperhead Democrats. Their lengthy laundry list of complaints and accusations focused heavily on Republican abuses and shortcomings generally, and the Lincoln administration particularly. The convention denounced the war as Lincoln's and the Republicans' responsibility, with abolitionist fanatics in particular at the root of all national discord, including the Union's internal political divisions. They further charged Lincoln and the Republicans with incompetence, malfeasance, corruption, and despotism, singling out the Emancipation Proclamation as an unconstitutional, unwise detour from the war's

¹ Bishop Crumrine to Boyd Crumrine, January 29, 1863, Bishop Crumrine Letters, xv-c-32, Learned T. Bulman '48 Historical Archive and Museum at Washington and Jefferson College (hereafter HAMWJC), Washington, PA.

real purpose of maintaining the Union. Moreover, their resolutions denounced emancipation's inclusion as a war goal as a *de facto* fraud perpetrated upon all those soldiers who enlisted on the understanding that the war's only objective was the Union's restoration. The resolutions also proclaimed that the Democrats alone stood for the Constitution and the rule of law, and only its policies could guarantee liberty and future prosperity, and the prospect of a peaceful settlement and reunion with the Confederacy was possible. Finally, the convention formally endorsed the editorial conduct of both of the county's Democratic newspapers, the *Examiner* and *Review*, as well as its Democratic congressman and state representatives, including William Hopkins, whom the delegates were instructed to support for the gubernatorial nomination at the upcoming state convention. A denunciation of the state's repeal of its tonnage tax was added almost as an afterthought. None of the convention's eleven separate resolutions condemned the Confederacy or offered cooperation or support of any kind to the Lincoln administration or state Republican leaders, revealing that the local Democratic party was increasingly focused on its own political agenda and rhetorical war against the Republicans.²

In his 1980 book, *The Pennsylvania Anti-war Movement 1861-1865*, historian Arnold Shankman describes mainstream Copperheads as individuals or groups actively and earnestly opposed to the Lincoln administration, its war effort, and Republican policies generally, but without traitorous loyalty to, or sympathy for the Confederacy. Although Republicans naturally interpreted such criticism as disloyalty, Copperheads were defending their conservative ideological understanding of the Constitution and presidential powers in a highly emotional wartime context. As Shankman notes, a radical fringe element nested among the state's Copperheads, such as Francis W. Hughes, the Democratic lawyer and politician who called not only for an end to the war, but at one point advocated Pennsylvania's secession from the United

² *Reporter-Tribune*, February 18, 1863.

States and association with the Confederacy. Radicals like Hughes, who pushed their rhetoric up to, or even beyond treason's demarcation line inevitably tainted the entire opposition in the jaundiced eyes of their Unionist opponents.³

The more moderate Copperhead majority, however, were not traitorous sympathizers in league with the Confederacy, which was the common historiographic theme for decades after the Civil War. Beginning in the mid-twentieth century, when revisionist historians such as Eugene Roseboom and Frank Klement began to thoroughly re-examine Copperheads on their own merit instead of through the inherited Unionist accusatory lens, scholarly assessments have attempted to portray them more accurately. Klement's study of Wisconsin Copperheads, for example, interprets them not as disloyal traitors, but as political conservatives who saw themselves politically as defending the Jeffersonian-style republican framework. Their widespread slogan, "the Constitution as it is, and the Union as it was," demonstrates their conservative ideological bent. Washington's Copperheads fall into this same political category, as evidenced by their central theme of alleging the abuse of legitimate powers and usurpation of illegitimate powers by Lincoln and his Republican cohorts while presenting themselves as the Constitution's only protectors.⁴

Although their political philosophy was the anchor for local Copperhead beliefs, other factors simultaneously played into their rhetoric and conduct. Racism was clearly part of the white Americans' social worldview, and not only did emancipation carry troubling legal and constitutional questions to most Democrats, they perceived a social and economic threat, openly warning of being inundated with freedmen who would become economic competitors and sexual

³ Arnold Shankman, *The Pennsylvania Anti-war Movement 1861-1865* (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Press, 1980), 13-17.

⁴ Frank Klement, "Copperheads and Copperheadism in Wisconsin: Democratic Opposition to the Lincoln Administration," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Spring 1959), 183.

predators. Copperhead meetings and resolutions, for example, routinely denounce blacks as inferior, unworthy of citizenship, and an outright menace to white society. While emancipation clearly carried constitutional questions with it, the racial element was inextricably linked, and as Lincoln and the Republicans gradually moved toward full emancipation, first through the Confiscation Acts, then the Emancipation Proclamation, and finally full abolition via constitutional amendment, the Democratic opposition naturally combined its legal and social arguments against it in their oppositional tactics. Indeed, as Philip Shaw Paludan suggests, emancipation and racial issues were perhaps the single most important aspect of the 1862 campaign and election, and the ferocity of Democratic rhetorical attacks prompted equally strident Republican accusations of disloyalty and treason. James McPherson agrees, arguing that opposition to emancipation and the larger race issue was a central component in Democratic political strategies by 1862 and 1863.⁵ Constitutional objections and racial attacks on Republican anti-slavery moves only increased into 1864 and even survived the war by several years.

Conscription added yet another dimension to the constitutional and racial debate. As historian Robert M. Sandow notes in his 2009 book, *Deserter Country: Civil War Opposition in the Pennsylvania Appalachians*, the draft was perhaps seen as the single most despotic and illegal act perpetrated by the Republicans against the free men of the North because it seemingly violated the single most basic principle of American republicanism, consent. Conscription struck at the heart of the American tradition of volunteer service, not to mention its widespread perceived class bias by allowing the hiring of a substitute or payment of cash to escape the draft. Not only was the draft a constitutional violation in principle, but the provost marshals sent into

⁵ Philip Shaw Paludan, *A People's Contest: The Union and Civil War 1861-1865* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 98-99; James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 506-07, 594.

communities for enforcement were seen as the literal embodiment of Republican despotism, arousing even more suspicion and resistance, particularly after the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled the Federal draft law unconstitutional but to no practical effect.⁶ Historian Jennifer L. Weber agrees that the draft was among the chief complaints among Democrats who turned against the war effort, noting that anti-conscription sentiment was so strong that it was not limited strictly to Copperheads, but that War Democrats and even some pro-war Republicans found it odious and antithetical to the Constitution and the general American political spirit. Even in heavily Republican Massachusetts, state officials, including Governor John Andrew, opposed the 1862 calls for states to begin drafting men, preferring instead to redouble their efforts to secure volunteers for the army.⁷

Robert Sandow offers another source of anti-war sentiment that was essentially a natural function of America's decentralized society and political system. Prior to the Civil War, both northerners and southerners lived in a highly localized world, socially, economically, and politically. Most direct interaction with government came at the local and state level, and the local postmaster was the most significant Federal official whom most rural dwellers would ever encounter. Pennsylvania's prevailing traditional rural localism, whether in the sparsely populated Appalachian Mountain region or the settled farmlands and small towns of Washington County, stood in direct opposition to modernizing, centralizing organizational forces embraced by the state and national Republican Party organizations, and as Sandow succinctly states, "rural communities were accustomed to controlling their own social and civic affairs and resented the intrusion of outsiders." As the Federal and state government assumed greater influence over

⁶ Robert M. Sandow, *Deserter Country: Civil War Opposition in Pennsylvania* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), 74-75

⁷ Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 88, 91-92; Thomas H. O'Connor, *Civil War Boston: Home Front and Battlefield* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 101.

individual localities, it was natural that many Democrats would associate the process with Republican encroachment on their inherited republican rights.⁸ In the larger cities or even industrializing rural areas, such as the Pennsylvania anthracite coal region, corporate entities, whether railroads, mills, mining concerns, or large banks, were also a more perceptible and visible manifestation of the centralizing tendency and economies of scale making headway in the North, and as Republicans continued to pursue their economic agenda during the war, it violated many Democrats' belief in antebellum rural Jacksonian-style republicanism.

Not only did many Democrats believe the draft was unconstitutional, but conscription also added to their resentment that the war's original and legitimate objective had been twisted into an ill-advised and nefarious war for black equality, placing whites across the North in sudden and inescapable danger. If the draft was inherently illegal and despotic from the Copperhead viewpoint, it was made worse by the fact that conscripted men would be forced to fight for blacks rather than the Union alone. Sandow notes Democratic newspapers and clubs in the Pennsylvania Appalachian region denouncing "niggerism" and "Black Republicans," and there is no reason to believe that Washington was any different. Despite the absence of Washington's *Examiner* and *Review* newspapers and their coverage of local Democratic clubs, the available fragments strongly suggest a broad continuity with Copperheads in central Pennsylvania and across the Union's Midwest.⁹

Although historian Frank Klement's pioneering revisionist work in the 1950s on Copperhead politics made invaluable advances in creating a more honest and accurate assessment of their beliefs, activities, and goals, Klement erred by reducing them to a noisy but essentially harmless fringe element in Northern politics. More recent scholarship, like Jennifer

⁸ Robert Sandow, *Deserter Country*, 59.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 80-83.

L. Weber's survey of Copperheads across the Union states, and Robert M. Sadow's more specific study of anti-war sentiment in north-central Pennsylvania, demonstrate that Copperhead politics and activism was indeed a powerful force that could, in certain times and places, threaten the war effort's integrity, or at least divert public energies from the confrontation with the Confederacy and buoy the South's hope for victory by way of the Union's internal dissensions. Washington's experience with Copperheads offers a case study that is more congruent with Weber's interpretation regarding its disruptive influence and potential to subvert unity of purpose and inflame intra-community conflict.

Washington's Copperheads seem to have placed economic concerns in a secondary or even tertiary position in their oppositional politics to Lincoln and the Republicans. While the local Democratic press and party organizations specifically criticized emancipation, the draft, and added frequent charges of incompetence and corruption, there was an apparent lack of specific criticism of Republican national economic policies, such as the tariff, Greenbacks, the 1862 Homestead Act, or the 1863 Bank Act. To the extent that local Democrats apparently complained about the economy, they tended to make vague charges about how Republican policies would lead to poverty and national ruin, and that only a return to Democratic policy could ensure future prosperity. Although the Democratic newspapers are no longer extant, there are few, if any, editorials in the *Reporter-Tribune* defending specific points in the Republican economic program, instead only making passing reference to how Lincoln's party would guarantee economic opportunity and security. This suggests that local Democrats were not spending much of their rhetorical energies on tariffs, monetary and bank policies, or other Republican economic measures.

Political scientist Richard Bense1 notes in his 1990 book *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America 1859-1877*, that emancipation and the draft, as well as various economic reforms and even the temporary suspension of habeas corpus and other civil liberties, were all components of an important new extension of Federal authority in an ongoing and accelerating state-building process. This Civil War-era state building process was firmly identified with the Republican economic policy agenda, which Democrats generally opposed, with only railroad development the only notable exception.¹⁰ Indeed, historians Richard Curry and Joel Silbey both argue that the Copperhead positions were essentially a wartime reflections of the party's antebellum conservative ideology. As Curry notes, "the Democratic party was the party of tradition – defender of the status quo, the bitter opponent of political and social change." Silbey agrees, noting that the oppositional Democrats believed their conservative political and social approach still represented a potential electoral majority by appealing to all ideologically conservative voters.¹¹ If mainstream Copperheads were essentially political, economic, and social conservatives, it is no wonder that they found virtually every major Republican initiative suspicious at best, or totally objectionable at worst.

Historian Martin Hershock, writing about Michigan's Copperheads, describes their continuity with compatriots across the Northern states, particularly in their opposition emancipation, the draft, and Lincoln's handling of civil liberties issues. As Hershock argues, most mid-nineteenth century American men believed in a republicanism that embraced the small, independent producer and citizen against large concentrations of economic and political power that would undermine the harmony of interests that had typified the Republic since its inception.

¹⁰ Richard Bense1, *Yankee Leviathan: the Origins of Central State Authority in America 1859-1877* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 141-42.

¹¹ Richard Curry, "Copperheadism and Continuity: The Anatomy of a Stereotype," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (January 1972), 32; Joel Silbey, *Respectable Minority: The Democratic Party in the Civil War Era, 1860-1868* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977), 67-69.

While Democrats saw themselves as a loyal opposition to curb Republican excesses and preserve the Constitution's integrity, the Republican response under the war's heavy pressures and high stakes was to brand this criticism as treason. This perhaps represents the essence of the Copperhead situation in Washington also; local oppositional Democrats were fundamentally and stridently conservative and dedicated to opposing the Republican agenda, war or no war, and as they progressively stepped up their political attacks, local Republicans were easily predisposed to interpret it as disloyalty or even treason.¹²

Most formal wartime opposition in Washington was expressed through Democratic Party organizations and the local press, and the existence of secret societies and other informal networks cannot be identified through substantiated evidence. Despite occasional accusations from the *Reporter-Tribune*, which warned of a menacing branch of the Knights of the Golden Circle as early as 1861, formal opposition was conducted through the Democratic party, and informal resistance did not apparently have any structure or organization, secret or otherwise. Sergeant Bishop Crumrine made reference to an acquaintance's affiliation with "rebel organizations" in Cross Creek Township. "I told you about him cheering for Jeff Davis on Christmas," he wrote on April 3, 1865, "and he acknowledged that he belonged to the rebel organizations at Cross Creek at that time, and I believe him a rebel now."¹³ Given Bishop Crumrine's intense partisan views, it is quite possible, even likely, that the "rebel organizations" of which he wrote were merely Democratic clubs that openly engaged in anti-Lincoln, anti-war, and anti-Republican politics. Pockets of draft resistance also existed, but again, it is highly unlikely that such resistance was formally organized. Existing evidence seems to indicate that

¹² Martin Herschok, "Copperheads and Radicals: Michigan Partisan Politics During the Civil War Era, 1860-1865," *Michigan Historical Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Spring 1992), 29-30, 44.

¹³ Bishop Crumrine to Boyd Crumrine, April 3, 1865. Bishop Crumrine Letters, xv-c-32, HAMWJC.

Copperhead political activity was overwhelmingly conducted in the open and through the Democratic Party and its various local clubs, not through secret cabals and surreptitious activity.

Washington County's Copperhead movement consisted mostly of ordinary local Democrats who sought to defend their republican ideology and conception of the American social order from perceived Republican threats at the national, state, and even local level. They were generally not traitors or rebel sympathizers like the Republicans attempted to portray them, but a loyal opposition unprepared to give their rivals unquestioned control over the government. As civil liberties suspensions, emancipation, conscription, battlefield setbacks, and other wartime pressures simultaneously mounted, the natural result was a full-blown partisan conflict that manifested itself into a protracted political battle between Copperheads and Unionists.

The substantial rise in Democrat political fortunes in 1862, both locally and throughout the North, indicated a growing discontent with Republican rule. Election statistics do not, however, indicate voter motivations, and the percentage of Democratic votes that came from true Copperhead-types, as opposed to simple party loyalty or other factors is difficult to determine. Regardless, local Republicans, like their fellows across the North, were alarmed at their growing electoral vulnerability, as well as the threat to the war effort's integrity that the Democratic surge seemed to indicate. The Democrats had to be countered, and Republicans throughout the North established Union Leagues in cities, towns, villages, and rural communities whose basic stated purpose was to resurrect the "Spirit of '61," in which partisan loyalties were muted and suspended in favor of a united approach to the task at hand, namely the war's successful prosecution and the rebellion's destruction; anything less was selfish and unpatriotic at best, treasonous at worst. Although Union Leagues pounded the "no-party" drum and sought War

Democrat allies, they were, as James McPherson notes, highly partisan and de facto auxiliaries to the Republican party.¹⁴

The Union Leagues found in Washington Borough and across the county were, beyond the universal pro-war and pro-unity message, quite unlike the Union Leagues in New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia examined by historian Melinda Lawson in *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North*. Lawson contends that in the large cities like Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, Union Leagues were formed not only to rally support for the war effort, but also to enhance the elites' social and political control over the unruly working class. Lawson describes the Philadelphia Union League as being in part an exclusive social club with formal membership obtainable only by special invitation, complete with a specially-constructed, luxurious headquarters. By contrast, Washington County's Union Leagues, whether in Washington Borough or one of the many smaller chapters scattered across the county, were open organizations dedicated solely to counter the Copperheads and maintain public support for the war. There is no evidence that there was even a formal membership process as there was in the Philadelphia League. A true working class had not developed in Washington Borough or the surrounding county, with possible exceptions for some of the river districts where coal mining was becoming a significant industry, so the social control aspect was not a significant aspect in Washington's Union League experience. Overall, Washington County's society and economy were still based on small-scale independent producers, particularly farmers, craftsmen, and small manufacturers, and with no significant conscious working-class to pressure the status quo, as in Philadelphia. Consequently, the class-conflict aspects were not overtly prominent locally. And unlike the New York Union League, for example, the Washington organizations did not mass

¹⁴ James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 599.

produce literature for distribution outside the immediate vicinity, nor were they envisioned as a tool for elite class survival, as Lawson finds in New York City.¹⁵

Washington's Union Leagues bear far more resemblance to what Robert M. Sandow found in central Pennsylvania's Appalachian region. These leagues followed the inherited rural and small town republican pattern that characterized local political life since early settlement. Union League leaders were not nationally important captains of industry and finance, but were the same relatively-small scale shopkeepers, merchants, craftsmen, and professionals that had traditionally provided local political and social leadership. Union League leaders and rank-and-file supporters had no great gulf of class and wealth; they met in comparatively plain or low-cost quarters, including the court house, churches, rented halls, private homes, or during temperate weather, outside.¹⁶

The Union League message in Washington County was simple, straightforward, and entirely focused on the war, and an 1863 handbill published by the Central Union League in Washington Borough summarizes their main tenets. The Rebels alone bear responsibility for the war; the only dividing lines now are between patriots and traitors; partisanship must be subordinated to earnest cooperation between all patriots in the name of victory; candidates for public office have a special duty to strive for the swift and successful prosecution of the war; those who denounce the government's actions for personal and political gain are unworthy of the public trust. Union Leagues in the townships and smaller boroughs across the county echoed these themes for the rest of the war.¹⁷

¹⁵ Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2002), 101-108.

¹⁶ Sandow, *Deserter Country*, 82-83.

¹⁷ "To the Loyal Citizens of Washington County," Union League handbill, August 1863, xv-j-461, HAMWJC.

The first official Union League meeting was held in Washington Borough on February 21, 1863, and although it downplayed all partisan aspects, its majority was clearly Republican, and attracting so-called loyal Democrats into the fold became one of its primary tasks. Its newly elected president, Alexander W. Acheson, reflected popular sentiments by suggesting that a countywide network of local Union Leagues be established for the purpose of instilling and reinforcing patriotism, loyalty, and dedication to the government's war effort. This network would then, as Acheson explained, "by means of out inter-dependent Associations...mitigate the acerbity of political discussions, cultivate a hearty Union spirit, and spread before the people reliable information as to all subjects connected with our National welfare during this rebellion."¹⁸ Within weeks, Union Leagues were holding meetings in townships and boroughs across the county, even in its most notorious Copperhead areas, although the most-well attended typically were held in Washington Borough itself.

Union League meetings and rallies followed the same general pattern at the various meetings around the county. At a typical meeting, a series of orators denounced the rebels and their sympathizers on the one hand, and praised all who sacrificed for the Union on the other. The scheduled speakers tended to be local Republican leaders, backed by at least one Democrat if possible, presenting the Unionist case and attacking Copperhead critics. Alexander W. Acheson was perhaps the most frequent lecturer on the loyalty circuit, and was frequently joined by his colleague at the bar, William McKennan, son of the late local luminary Thomas M.T. McKennan. But even political neophytes, like newly admitted attorney Boyd Crumrine, future author of the county's second history, often appeared as keynote speakers at Union League meetings. True to their stated "no-party" principle, Union League meetings relished local War Democrats as speakers. For example, county judge Peter Shannon, a longtime Democrat, spoke

¹⁸ *Reporter-Tribune*, February 25, 1863.

at a Union League meeting in Washington Borough in May 1863 and delivered a withering attack on the Copperhead Democrats, denouncing them as traitorous scoundrels beneath contempt, and admonishing all patriotic Democrats to put partisan considerations aside for the war's duration.¹⁹

Perhaps the most prominent guest speaker to address a meeting was Francis Pierpont, Governor of the Restored State of Virginia, who addressed the Central Union League in Washington Borough less than a month before West Virginia's formal admission into the Union, delivering words of encouragement and thanks to his loyal neighbors in Pennsylvania.²⁰ Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin appeared in Washington Borough in September 1863 as he campaigned for re-election, but the gathering was a Union party campaign rally, not a formal Union League meeting. Typical Union League meetings and other political events overwhelmingly featured local speakers, however.

In addition to political leaders, Union League meetings often featured clergymen in their proceedings. Ministers had undertaken limited roles in Unionist meetings since early in the war, when their participation carries few risks. By 1863, with the war a highly contentious issue on a number of fronts, ministers were bound to alienate some portion of their congregation and community with strong political statements about the war, and such activities invited criticism from the local opposition press. Nevertheless, Union Leagues still found local ministers to speak on their behalf. For example, the Rev. John Baine of Canonsburg Borough, just a few miles from Washington, appeared at a Union League meeting in the Republican stronghold of Chartiers Township in April 1863. After assuring the audience that he did not endorse any political party, he spoke for more than an hour about the virtues of Union and Constitution, and

¹⁹ *Reporter-Tribune*, May 27, 1863.

²⁰ *Ibid*, June 3, 1863; *Ibid*, September 30, 1863.

the heavenly mandate to preserve it. Receiving bursts of applause throughout, the reverend argued that it was “impossible to support the government while opposing the task of winning the war.”²¹

At a Union League meeting in February 1863, local Methodist Episcopal minister Henry Miller, a War Democrat, recognizing that he would doubtlessly draw protests from the Peace Democrats, nevertheless spoke at length about the need to maintain unity of purpose behind Lincoln and the war effort; there were now only patriots and traitors, and the Peace Democracy belonged to the latter. Reverend Miller made his remarks even more unpalatable to Copperheads when he spoke in favorably on emancipation, and as he predicted, he was assailed in both the *Review* and the *Examiner*. Miller’s conflict was not just with the Democratic press, however, but he was also embroiled in a personal war of words with William Hopkins. As late as January 1865, Reverend Miller was still sparring with Hopkins, primarily over the emancipation issue, and in a strident open letter to the state senator in the *Reporter-Tribune*, the minister denounced Hopkins’ inappropriate use of scripture against emancipation, defended Lincoln’s decisions about emancipation, assailed Hopkins’ professions of loyalty to the government and Constitution as willful distortion, and accused him of using the war for personal political gain. Finally, Miller explained that he had no ill-will towards the Democratic Party itself, but he simply opposed its stance on the war and emancipation; his fight was with not with the party, but Hopkins personally and the Peace faction.²² Not only does the Miller versus Hopkins rivalry show the legislator’s shift towards oppositional politics, it also demonstrates that clergymen who entered or remained in the political arena after 1861 were treated as full-fledged political players subject to the same treatment as any secular political actor.

²¹ *Reporter-Tribune*, April 8, 1863.

²² *Ibid*, March 11, 1863; *Ibid*, January 13, 1865.

Beyond the scheduled speakers, League meetings were open to public remarks from rank-and-file citizens, which were frequently included in the *Reporter-Tribune's* accounts, especially if the person was a Democrat. Enoch Dye, a former resident who had recently moved to Ohio, was in Washington Borough to visit his family in May 1863 and attended a Union League meeting despite efforts by some local Democrats to dissuade him. Dye reminded the audience that although he was a Democrat, it was his duty to stand by President Lincoln, the duly elected executive, in order to achieve victory over the traitorous rebels.²³ Democrats like Dye were the crucial audience whom the Union Leagues across the county and their allied newspapers coveted the most; Republicans needed far less convincing, but every Democrat who stood with the Unionists was not only an asset in the current crisis, but they represented possible postbellum Republican converts by way of the Unionist halfway house.

Local Democratic opposition, as with their counterparts across the North, attacked the Union Leagues as secret and subversive organizations that operated with the nefarious intent of overthrowing the Constitution to establish a Republican despotic state, complete with millions of emancipated blacks who would fan out across the North to destroy white society. The March 4, 1863 *Reporter-Tribune*, for example, went to great lengths to explain that the Central Union League operated openly, invited all interested parties to attend its meetings, welcomed participation from all loyal Americans, and allowed full freedom of speech. But despite these assurances, Democrats continued to cast suspicion on local Union Leagues, just as Unionists across the North were convinced that Democratic organizations were disloyal to the Constitution and dedicated to undermining the war effort. For the rest of the war, Union Leagues and

²³ *Reporter-Tribune*, June 3, 1863.

Democratic clubs would both continue to organize their loyal members, seek new adherents, and denounce their rival as evil incarnate.²⁴

The Union Leagues represented the direct popular mobilization efforts of local Republicans and their War Democrat allies, and the Washington *Reporter-Tribune* complemented that endeavor by continuing to transmit Unionist principles and arguments to the larger reading public, a task to which it had been dedicated since the war began. Claiming the largest circulation of any non-Pittsburgh newspaper in western Pennsylvania, it was an unwavering voice of Unionist sentiment and eagerly assisted the Union Leagues in its columns until war's end. With rhetorical invectives already reaching new heights by early 1863, the *Reporter-Tribune* conducted both spirited offensives and clever defensive tactics to advance the Unionist agenda. By 1863, the *Reporter-Tribune* ran one or more articles virtually every week directly challenging the *Examiner* and/or the *Review* as part of its relentless effort to discredit the two local Democratic newspapers and their party generally, accusing them of everything from miscomprehension and falsification to outright stupidity to willful treason, using every rhetorical tactic from Aristotelian logic to sarcasm to angry accusations of treason.²⁵

It is notable that despite the highly emotional political climate, the *Reporter-Tribune*, like the Union Leagues, took great pains to differentiate between their traitorous Copperhead opponents and so-called loyal War Democrat allies. For the Republican newspaper, Copperhead strength in the county's northern was attributable to the *Examiner's* relentless and deliberate disinformation campaign, leaving "the loyal Democratic citizens in the northern part of our county...hoodwinked, bamboozled, deceived, and misrepresented by this traitor who has

²⁴ *Reporter-Tribune*, March 4, 1863.

²⁵ *Ibid*, January 1863-November 1865.

controlled their meetings and moulded [sic] their proceedings....”²⁶ Portraying the rank-and-file Democrat as blameless was a crucial rhetorical tactic as they tried to pull as many Democrats as possible away from their party loyalty and into common cause with the Unionists.

To help buttress its purported no-party Unionist image, the newspaper frequently published comments from individual soldiers and officers, including Democrats, or resolutions adopted by whole companies or regiments, expressing Unionist sentiments and/or assailing Copperhead malignity. For example, in March 1863, in an obvious attack on the *Examiner* and the *Review*, it printed an anonymous letter from a local Democrat private which stated that the suppression of disloyal newspapers would do more good for the soldiers’ morale than capturing the Confederate capital.²⁷ Another unnamed Democrat soldier from the 1st Pennsylvania Reserve Cavalry, which was heavily populated with Washington County men, wrote that after reading a recent edition of the *Examiner*, “I could have burned the editor and the press together, as I did the paper, if I had them here.”²⁸

Disgust with Copperheads and anti-war newspapers was not simply a manipulated exaggeration by the *Reporter-Tribune* editors, however, as evidenced in private letters by Bishop Crumrine and Alexander W. Acheson’s three sons, David, John, and Alexander, Jr. David Acheson, a Republican turned pro-abolitionist, expressed open contempt in his private correspondence for anti-war Democrats, and in his frustration, he did not distinguish between War Democrats and Copperheads. As James McPherson argues, Union soldiers frequently expressed their contempt for Copperheads, whom they believed were betraying or at least weakening the war effort. “To me the Democrats are the same as traitors. Their success will be the cause of much rejoicing throughout the South,” David Acheson complained. “How can it be

²⁶ *Reporter-Tribune*, February 18, 1863.

²⁷ *Ibid*, February 11, 1863; *Ibid*, March 11, 1863.

²⁸ *Ibid*, July 1, 1863.

that sane men...trust in such a party-- a party wedded to treason.”²⁹ Writing to his mother in March 1863, he expressed disapproving amazement that his Democrat cousin, Alexander Wishart, a combat-wounded former infantry officer, was listed in the *Washington Review* as a committee member at a recent Peace Democrat meeting. “He has gotten into rather low company. He ought to be ashamed of himself. I am compelled to suppose that he is seeking for office. He will rue this. I least I hope he may,” Acheson complained.³⁰ In one of the last letters before his death on July 2 at the Battle of Gettysburg, Acheson bitterly predicted that the Copperheads would be remembered in the same breath with Benedict Arnold.³¹

Letters by David Acheson’s elder brothers, John and Alexander Jr., express similar sentiments. Alexander W. Acheson, Jr., also a company captain in the 140th Pennsylvania Infantry, in a March 24, 1863 letter to his mother, wished the Copperheads at home could hear the regiment’s opinions about them. “Every man in the 140th hates the name Copperhead,” he assured her. “I say *every*, but there *are* a few who came into the army through other motives than patriotism, and they are favorable to the views and actions of these ‘Peace men.’” Writing to her again four days later, Acheson described his satisfaction that the Copperheads were “withering before the blasts of loyalty,” and he again asserted that they were “universally despised by all the soldiers of the army.”³² The third brother, John Wishart Acheson, did not mention political matters in his extant correspondence with the exception of one letter written just after the war on October 6, 1865, in which he applauds the local Republican majority at the

²⁹ James M. McPherson, *For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 143-45; David Acheson to Alexander W. Acheson, October 12, 1862, ed. Jane M Fulcher, *Family Letters in a Civil War Century: Achesons, Wilsons, Brownsons, Wisharts, and Others of Washington, Pennsylvania* (Avella, PA: Privately published, 1986), 358.

³⁰ David Acheson to Mary Wilson Acheson, March 17, 1863, ed. Fulcher, *Family Letters in a Civil War Century*, 372. Captain Acheson’s assumption was correct; Alexander Wishart was the Democrats’ candidate for county sheriff in 1864.

³¹ David Acheson to Mary Wilson Acheson, June 9, 1863, ed. Fulcher, *Family Letters in a Civil War Century*, 380.

³² Alexander Acheson, Jr. to Mary Wilson Acheson, March 24, 1863, *Ibid*, 414; Alexander Acheson, Jr. to Mary Acheson, March 28, 1863, *Ibid*, 415.

polls by saying, “our town, which has been Democratic for so long...has been redeemed and has given a clear Union majority. So also has the county....,” clearly implying that previous Democrat majorities had brought disgrace.³³ Indeed, Captain Alexander Acheson included in a letter to his mother a list of resolutions written by his regimental colonel and supported by the other officers, denouncing the anti-war organizations, meetings, speeches, resolutions, and general sentiments that express “more sympathy for the rebels...than for their friends and neighbors in the field, periling their lives in defence [sic] of the rights they are quietly enjoying – that we feel for them all the contempt that naturally springs from loyal hearts for...cowards, Tories, and traitors.”³⁴

The Acheson brothers’ anti-Democratic sentiments are not surprising coming from sons of a leading local Republican. The case of Sergeant Bishop Crumrine, son of a Democrat farmer from southeastern Washington County, shows a family torn by political dissension. Whether Bishop Crumrine was War Democrat or a Republican like his elder brother Boyd, is unclear, but in a letter to him on February 22, 1863, the sergeant claimed that a recent edition of the *Washington Review* had been passed around his Company, and the men generally regarded it as secessionist. “I think if secesh papers at home were annihilated, the army would soon finish the rebellion.”³⁵ In a March 1, 1863 letter to his brother, Crumrine again vented his frustrations with politics, arguing that “if it were not for the party in opposition to the Government, we soldiers would be home soon, but as it is, I tremble for the result of this war, and I am sorry that Father is one of that party.”³⁶ Although Crumrine lamented his own father’s involvement in oppositional politics, it did not impact the sergeant’s dedication to the Union cause, and he even outright

³³ Ibid, 327. Letter from John Wishart Acheson to Captain W. B. Biddle, October 6, 1865.

³⁴ Ibid, 418, Alexander W. Acheson, Jr. to Mary Wilson Acheson, April 4, 1863.

³⁵ Bishop Crumrine to Boyd Crumrine, February 22, 1863, Bishop Crumrine Letters, xv-c-32, HAMWJC.

³⁶ Bishop Crumrine to Boyd Crumrine, March 1, 1863, Ibid.

condemned his father and his politics. “I think Father is an enemy of the country,” he confided to his brother. “...he is a Copperhead, and I tell you I hate them worse than the Rebbles [sic]. One deserves respect, but the other deserves none.”³⁷ In another letter to his brother dated May 28, 1863, Crumrine again vented his frustration with their father and the local Democratic press, saying “he cannot expect me to write when he is always abusing the army and always rejoicing its defeats and rejoicing when it is victorious – he won’t listen to reason but is guided by the *Examiner*, a more seceshion [sic] paper was never published. The editor should take warning...or his shop may be cleaned out and scrubbed up.”³⁸

The private letters by the Acheson brothers and Bishop Crumrine demonstrate that news of political tensions at home reached local soldiers and weighed on their minds. Their testimony also suggests that they and their comrades generally agreed that unconstructive political opposition was unpatriotic at best and treasonable at worst, and their anger with domestic political squabbling is evident. In fact, both David Acheson and Bishop Crumrine were frustrated to the point that they wished the horrors of war could be visited upon Washington County so its citizens would appreciate the situation’s true gravity.³⁹ In an 1864 letter, Crumrine bitterly complained that the people at home simply did not understand the true situation otherwise “tens of thousands of you would be rushing to arms against the rebels.... I wish to God 40,000 of them would march through Washington County,” before adding a final bitter comment, “I hope Pennsylvania may be destroyed –utterly annihilated if she pursues her present course.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid, April 28, 1863.

³⁸ Bishop Crumrine to Boyd Crumrine, May 28, 1863, Bishop Crumrine Letters, XV-c-32, HAMWJC.

³⁹ Bishop Crumrine to Boyd Crumrine, July 24, 1864, Ibid; David Acheson to Jane Wilson Acheson, May 8, 1863, ed. Fulcher, *Family Letters in a Civil War Century*, 379.

⁴⁰ Bishop Crumrine to Boyd Crumrine, July 14, 1864, Bishop Crumrine Letters, xv-c-32, HAMWJC.

Newspaper coverage and private correspondence both demonstrate a deeply divided, bitter community by 1863, and their ongoing conflict included virtually anything about the war, from broad political issues like emancipation and the draft, to attaching political blame to battlefield setbacks, to parsing the minutia of public meetings for anything that could be used as a rhetorical bludgeon. “The Cross Creek editor of the *Examiner*,” the *Reporter-Tribune* opined in February 1863, linking Donehoo to the county’s most notorious Copperhead township, “snarling under our exposure of his treason, for the hundredth time seeks to put an extinguisher upon us by calling us ‘abolitionist,’ as if that term any longer had terrors for men of ordinary sense.” The Republican editors then mocked Donehoo, saying “an abuse of abolitionists ... is about the only capital left to traitors. It would be cruel to deprive our neighbor of it.”⁴¹

Samuel S. Armstrong, a local corporal serving in the 22nd Pennsylvania Cavalry, wrote to the *Reporter-Tribune* in March 1863 complaining of recent *Examiner* editorial assaults on emancipation and black soldiers, as well as its allegation of the Union army’s faltering will to continue the war. Interestingly, just like the local Union Leagues and the *Reporter-Tribune* editors, Armstrong defended the Emancipation Proclamation based on wartime necessity, not moral considerations. “As we advance into the enemy’s lands [and] free what slaves we can, will it not tend to weaken the enemy? None dare to deny it,” he explained. Armstrong also criticized opposition to black soldiers and denied that soldiers generally favored an immediate end to hostilities because of the utter lack of progress in the war for over a year; there had been tremendous progress, the corporal asserted, and the army had made far too many sacrifices to accept anything short of outright victory. Armstrong’s exasperation with Copperhead critics is revealed in his rhetorical question, “what is to be thought of such men pretending to be Union

⁴¹ *Reporter-Tribune*, February 11, 1863.

Men, yet are ever sending up their ceaseless howls...., but are never heard to breathe a murmur against the wrongs and outrages of their Southern brethren?”⁴²

The Democratic county convention in Washington Borough on February 9, 1863, in which Ohio Copperhead Clement Vallandigham was hastily endorsed for the next year’s presidential nomination, followed the same themes as previous Copperhead or Peace Democrat meetings. *Examiner* editor John Donehoo made a stridently anti-Lincoln, anti-Republican, anti-war speech, calling the conflict “useless” and urging an immediate ceasefire and negotiated settlement; it was Lincoln’s war, and there was not the “slightest smell of blood on the garments of the Democracy.”⁴³ Canonsburg Borough elder and leading Democrat William Callohan supposedly told the audience that “the war was now being waged for the benefit of men in the army, nine tenths of whom are thieves and robbers.” Ever vigilant for the opportunity to impugn Democratic opposition, the *Reporter-Tribune* eagerly pounced on Callohan’s alleged remarks as more proof of their perfidy. Callohan denied making the remark, even writing a letter of explanation to the *Reporter-Tribune*, saying that he had described only war contractors and jobbers as thieves and robbers, not the soldiers themselves. Although the *Reporter-Tribune* editors reluctantly agreed to give Callohan the benefit of the doubt, they continued to plant their own seeds of doubt by maintaining the veracity and accuracy of their source at the Democratic convention. Discrediting any prominent local Copperhead Democrat was too important to take his explanation at face value and drop the point.⁴⁴

In early 1863, as the first Union Leagues were established and mobilized in Washington Borough and across the county, the *Reporter-Tribune* stepped up its editorial campaign against

⁴² Samuel S. Armstrong to the *Reporter-Tribune* Editors, March 7, 1863, xv-c-65, HAMWJC. In his draft, Armstrong requested that the editors only publish the first letter of his last name.

⁴³ *Reporter-Tribune*, February 18, 1863.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

the Copperhead Democrats, devoting more space in its weekly columns to dueling with its Democratic rivals on a variety of local war-related issues. For instance, within just a few weeks' time, the Republican editors accused Copperheads of attempting to dissuade soldiers at home on leave or convalescence from returning to duty, defended Washington College president John W. Scott against the *Examiner's* accusations regarding Scott's alleged abolitionist zeal, defended the Lincoln administration against charges of despotism, denounced the *Review* for its attack on the Methodist Episcopal Church's pronouncements against slavery, reprinted resolutions passed by Pennsylvania regiments against Copperhead activities, and reminded its readers how beloved the *Examiner* and *Review* were among the Confederate citizens of Romney, Virginia.⁴⁵ Even petty personal attacks on their opposition became more frequent, as when the Democrat district attorney, who had recently addressed a Peace Democrat meeting in Washington Borough, was described as "flatulent and pretentious."⁴⁶ Pulling no punches, the *Reporter-Tribune* openly and regularly accused *Examiner* editor John Donehoo, of intentional deceit as well as traitorous sympathy for the Confederacy. "The object of [Donehoo's] existence seems to be to delude and deceive," the *Reporter-Tribune* complained in March 1863.⁴⁷

To add weight to its accusations, the Republican newspaper frequently published admonishments from Union regiments and individual soldiers against Copperheads generally, and the local Democratic newspapers particularly, with extra delight when such statements came from Washington County units and men. For example, an officers' meeting of the 85th Pennsylvania Infantry regiment, heavily populated by Washington men, unanimously adopted strong anti-Copperhead resolutions in March 1863 that were naturally highlighted in the

⁴⁵ *Reporter-Tribune*, February 25, 1863; *Ibid*, March 4, 1863; *Ibid*, February 25, 1863; *Ibid*, March 11, 1863; *Ibid*, February 18, 1863.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, March 18, 1863.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

Reporter-Tribune. “We regard with indignation, sorrow, and alarm the untimely and vindictive assaults upon the head of the nation,” their resolution explained. “We regard all assaults upon the Government as assaults upon us.... We earnestly call upon all good citizens at home, regardless of former political affiliations, to stand by, encourage, and aid the Government.” The officers’ resolutions meshed perfectly with the Unionist message, but the fact that the signatories included Lt. Colonel Henry Purviance, part-owner and co-editor of the *Reporter-Tribune* before joining the army, and John Wishart Acheson, son of local Union League activist Alexander W. Acheson, also guaranteed extensive coverage and positive commentary in that paper.⁴⁸

In early 1863, as the Union Leagues gathered momentum and political division further deepened, Democrat William Hopkins was by then clearly identified with the Peace faction. In addition to his rhetorical duel with local Unionist minister Rev. Henry Miller in February, lengthy Republican editorials dedicated to refuting one of his speeches at a recent Democrat meeting further indicate his changed views. The May 6, 1863 *Reporter-Tribune* shows that a recent Hopkins speech at a Democratic meeting focused on Lincoln’s and the Republicans failures and flaws, with emphasis on constitutional questions. Hopkins allegedly singled out the Emancipation Proclamation for particularly harsh criticism, mocking it as the Abolition Proclamation, before finally charging that fraud and corruption was rampant under Republican stewardship. Apparently Hopkins’ understanding of the Constitution, property rights, and the rule of law, his racism, and his perception of Republican misconduct, led to his association with the Peace Democrats, rather than a lack of patriotism, foolishness, or latent sympathies for the rebellion, as the *Reporter-Tribune* intimated.⁴⁹ Hopkins’ open defection to the Copperheads symbolizes the deep and enduring cleavages in Washington’s politics after two years of war. If

⁴⁸ *Reporter-Tribune*, March 25, 1863.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, May 6, 1863; *Ibid*, May 13, 1863.

Alexander W. Acheson was the leading Union League spokesman, he had a formidable opponent in William Hopkins.

Political friction and anxiety continued to rise throughout the Union in the spring of 1863 as intense fighting resumed in both the Western theatre and Virginia, where Grant's failures to capture Vicksburg and Hooker's debacle at Chancellorsville in May accelerated political discord and invectives to new heights. As Unionists across the county redoubled their political efforts to defend Lincoln, the Republicans, and the war effort, so did the Peace Democrat opposition. In June, local Democrats, furious at the administration's treatment of Clement Vallandigham, submitted a petition to President Lincoln criticizing his "arbitrary arrest, illegal trial, and inhumane imprisonment," and demanding his "immediate and unconditional release."⁵⁰ At the same time, as news of Lee's new incursion into Maryland again set off alarm bells across Pennsylvania. General Halleck's warning of a possible incursion into southwestern Pennsylvania reached Washington Borough early on June 14, and after an immediate emergency town meeting, defensive preparations were begun, including the initial steps in forming a home guard militia in case Confederate raiders attempted to strike at Pittsburgh via Washington.⁵¹ The fact that Alexander Wishart, a combat-wounded ex-infantry officer then associating with the Peace Democrats, was the recording secretary at the emergency meeting indicates that perhaps the only thing that motivated Washingtonians to rise above their political divisions was the specter of an actual Confederate invasion, for once the threat passed, full scale conflict between Unionists and Copperhead-types immediately resumed.

The sobering battlefield casualties from Gettysburg, estimated to have killed and wounded more Washington men than the entire war up to that point, did nothing to reverse or

⁵⁰ James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 645; Frances Elizabeth Marvin, "Washington County in the Civil War," 69-70 (master's thesis, Pennsylvania State College, 1933), HIST. COLL 974.882 M368, HAMWJC..

⁵¹ Marvin, "Washington County and the Civil War," 72.

even dampen the raucous discord that characterized countywide politics. In fact, the Gettysburg campaign was yet another issue over which the factions could quarrel. The *Reporter-Tribune*, ever-vigilant for the opportunity to ring the Unionist bell, bitterly assailed William Hopkins for his remarks at a Democrat Independence Day meeting in the southeastern part of the county that the Union had lost every battle since the Emancipation Proclamation, accusing him of a gross insult to all Union men under arms, a charge which Hopkins stridently denied. Similarly, Washington Borough's Unionist editors hammered the Peace Democrats in Claysville, a small village several miles west of Washington Borough, for holding a stridently anti-war themed Independence Day celebration while the county's gallant dead at Gettysburg were still lying on the battlefield.⁵²

Violent opposition to the war was relatively rare, but there were several incidents across the county, including one in the war's first summer in the village of West Middletown, not far from Cross Creek Township and about half way between Washington Borough and the Virginia panhandle border. In August 1861, a local man was shot and wounded while he and several other Unionist men attempted to disarm a southern sympathizer who had been insulting village Unionists and menacing them with a pistol.⁵³ Major confrontations were mostly political and rhetorical through 1862, but as the pattern of mutual criticism, recrimination, and denunciation continued throughout 1863 and into 1864, violent confrontations did occasionally erupt. For instance, in late July 1863, a group of provost marshal soldiers in Cross Creek Township to press recalcitrant draftees into duty were fired upon from someone hidden in an adjacent cornfield, and while bunked at a local Unionist's home that night, their wagon was stolen and destroyed by

⁵² *Washington Reporter Tribune*, July 8, 1863; Ibid, July 15, 1863.

⁵³ Ibid, August 29, 1863.

local draft resisters.⁵⁴ Further political violence appeared again in October 1863, with an armed confrontation between some Copperheads and furloughed local cavalrymen in the village of Hillsborough about a week before the state elections in October, in which Copperhead Benjamin Brady, a brother to Washington Borough's chief burgess, was shot in the arm. In Washington Borough on the evening of the state elections, Democrats apparently engaged a night of terror against the black population.⁵⁵

In May 1864, three Cross Creek men were convicted in US Court in Pittsburgh for obstructing the draft the previous winter, but since the situation had been quiet in that area following the men's arrest, they were given relatively light sentences, likely in hopes of easing tensions and diffusing draft resistance in Washington County.⁵⁶ Although active draft resistance was perhaps not as widespread in Washington County as what historian Robert Sadow discovered in the northern tier of Pennsylvania's Appalachian region, it is clear that many local Democrats held the draft in contempt and some did try to resist, either through non-compliance or sometimes violence. But political violence was not always perpetrated by Copperheads. On September 18, 1863, following a Democratic meeting in Washington Borough, several Cross Creek men claimed they were assaulted by rock-throwing abolitionists as they passed through the small borough of West Middletown on their way home. "This is another instance of [abolitionist] love for free speech and respectability," the *Washington Review* complained.⁵⁷

In this highly charged atmosphere, the county's worst violent incident occurred in Washington Borough on March 1, 1864. "I hear the [Ringgold Cavalry] boys are home and have been attacking Copperheads. I would like to know the particulars," Bishop Crumrine wrote from

⁵⁴ *Reporter-Tribune*, July 29, 1863.

⁵⁵ *Reporter-Tribune*, October 14, 1863; *Ibid*, October 21, 1863.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, May 4, 1864.

⁵⁷ Marvin, *Washington County in the Civil War*, 71, HAMWJC. Marvin cited the October 8, 1863 *Washington (PA) Review*, a staunchly Democratic newspaper.

Fort Delaware on March 6, still apparently unaware of the violence and death in Washington Borough less than a week earlier. “It appears as if soldiers and citizens cannot agree, and it’s a good thing for the county for them to come home and straighten out Copperheads once in a while. There will be a warm time when we all get home,” Crumrine continued.⁵⁸ The Ringgold Cavalry company, recently merged into the 22nd Pennsylvania Cavalry Regiment, had been granted a furlough after their recent reenlistment, and arrived in Washington Borough on February 29, 1864. According to the *Reporter-Tribune*, the unit was not in Washington just to relax among friends and family, but also to recruit, which may have evoked ire from some local Copperheads, but more significantly, there was a history of confrontation between Ringgold cavalymen and anti-war Democrats. Upon arrival in the Borough, the troopers immediately deposited their weapons, including a 12-pounder artillery piece, with the provost marshal at the county courthouse, before disbursing to several local hotels for an overnight stay. That evening, despite all drinking establishments being closed by the borough’s chief burgess, anti-war Democrat Andrew Brady, several allegedly intoxicated Ringgold troopers roamed the streets searching for, and making loud threats against, resident Copperheads John Lennox and the chief burgess’ brother, Benjamin Brady, who had been wounded in a confrontation with furloughed Ringgold cavalymen the previous fall at the village of Hillsborough, several miles east of Washington. According to the *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, Brady had been shot in the arm during the Hillsborough incident, and had since harbored a special resentment against the Ringgold Cavalry. Alexander Cotton, the 18 year-old son of a prosperous local trader, pointed Brady and Lennox out to the angry soldiers, and only vigorous and timely intervention by neutral parties prevented them from inflicting their wrath on the two Copperheads. With tempers still running

⁵⁸ Bishop Crumrine to Boyd Crumrine, March 6, 1864, Bishop Crumrine Letters, xv-c-32, HAMWJC; The *Ringgold Cavalry* was an independent cavalry company until its amalgamation into the 22nd Pennsylvania Cavalry regiment in the spring of 1864.

high the next morning, several Copperhead activists spotted young Cotton on Main Street and began to threaten and jostle him. When Lieutenant James P. Hart, a school teacher in civilian life, attempted to rescue Cotton, he was assailed and beaten mercilessly. As news of Hart's predicament reached the rest of the cavalrymen, they poured into the streets looking for revenge on the perpetrators, and a sizable brawl quickly erupted on Main Street just north of the court house and town square, with both Brady and Lennox on the scene. As the melee escalated and it seemed that the soldiers might be overwhelmed, private John Meeks made his way to the unit's artillery piece in front of the court house, which for reasons unknown was primed and loaded with double canister-shot, capable of inflicting horrendous carnage. Before Meeks could fire the cannon, the county sheriff intervened and prevented him from unleashing mass death on the unsuspecting brawlers. Meanwhile, as the fighting continued, several gunshots were fired by an unknown person, hitting three innocent bystanders, including a ten-year-old boy and two local men; within days, the boy and one of the men, local tannery owner David Wolf, were dead. The gunfire's immediate shock effect and the sheriff's presence of mind helped bring the situation under control, and although some people fingered Brady as the shooter, there was no proof. As Brady hurried away from the scene in the aftermath, one of the still-furious soldiers allegedly fired two pistol shots at him, barely missing just as Brady turned a corner and escaped the line of fire. The soldiers subsequently searched for Brady, but he remained safely secreted, and local Unionists persuaded them to cease their effort before renewed violence could erupt.⁵⁹

The disorder and violence appalled the *Reporter-Tribune* editors, who opined that regardless of past Copperhead provocations, no one had been threatening the Ringgold troopers on the evening of their arrival, and their inciting behavior had played a role in bringing on the

⁵⁹ *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, March 3, 1864; Ralph Haas, *The Ringgold Cavalry: The Rest of the Story* (Apollo, PA: Closson Press, 1988), 145-46; *Reporter-Tribune*, March 2, 1864; *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, March 3, 1864; *Pittsburgh Post*, March 3, 1864.

next day's tragic events. The Republican editors denounced the chaos and demanded that the parties responsible, whether civilian or soldier, be promptly punished. "We trust that the proper authorities will...take steps at once to bring to merited punishment all who are responsible for this most disgraceful scene of riot and bloodshed –be they who they may – in order that the public peace may be preserved...." Local Copperheads were quick to blame the troopers, but it was soon proven that the bullets were small caliber types not carried by any of the cavalymen.⁶⁰ The shooter in the street fight was never identified, but Unionists quickly exonerated the Ringgold Cavalry men, as demonstrated at a sumptuous banquet held in their honor in Washington Borough before their departure for Virginia in mid-April. The patriarchal and staunch Unionist John Hoge Ewing, whose eldest son was a Lieutenant Colonel in the 155th Pennsylvania Infantry, presided over the post-meal agenda, complimenting the unit's valorous battle record, thanking them for their sacrifice in a noble cause, and acknowledging and mourning the borough and county's dead, before condemning the South for starting the war in the first place. The recent bloodshed in the town's streets was studiously ignored throughout the banquet.⁶¹

Although the *Examiner* and the *Review's* coverage is lost, the Democratic Pittsburgh *Post* presented a vastly different version of the incident, in which Benjamin Brady was innocently working in his butcher shop when Lieutenant Hart and several other soldiers burst in, started a fist fight and immediately began shooting. The *Post* attributed the incident entirely to the "teachings of the Abolitionists, who tell the soldiers that the Democrats are their enemies, and they are responsible for the bloodshed in our streets today," and these sentiments were likely

⁶⁰ *Reporter-Tribune*, March 2, 1864.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, April 20, 1864.

echoed in Washington's Democratic press and in its subsequent Democratic meetings, using it as a bludgeon against Republicans throughout the year.⁶²

Notable political violence was absent in Washington Borough for precisely eight months after the Ringgold Cavalry incident, although bitter acrimony continued to dominate throughout that period. On November 1, less than two weeks after the state elections and one week before the presidential election, the only thing local Democrats and Unionists had in common was their emotional intensity and mutual animosity, which no doubt characterized that day's Democratic meeting at the county fairgrounds, just outside Washington Borough. Benjamin Brady was among the crowd walking back into town after the meeting when he engaged in fight with local Unionist Richard Fitzwilliams, who stabbed Brady through the heart as they fought, killing him almost instantly.⁶³ Fitzwilliams was nearly torn to pieces by the surrounding crowd, but William Hopkins and two of Brady's brothers successfully pleaded with the mob to allow justice to be done. Fitzwilliams sought refuge in a dry goods store on Main Street owned by Sample Sweeney, who was also arrested and charged with murder for allegedly supplying Fitzwilliams with the knife he used to kill Brady. After the coroner's inquest and a grand jury hearing, and with the *Examiner* and *Review* apparently predictably portraying Brady as a martyred hero, Fitzwilliams and Sweeney finally went to trial in the early spring of 1865, with prominent Unionist attorneys William McKennan and Alexander W. Acheson acting as counsel for the defendants. After considerable testimony by witnesses on both sides, the jury acquitted Fitzwilliams and Sample shortly after the war's end.⁶⁴ Benjamin Brady's involvement in multiple violent confrontations involving serious injury and death seems to be a rare case in

⁶² *Pittsburgh Post*, March 3, 1864.

⁶³ Richard Fitzwilliams may have been related to Thomas Fitzwilliams, a local radical abolitionist, which may help explain his conflict with Brady, but this link is unproven.

⁶⁴ *Reporter-Tribune*, November 9, 1864; *Ibid*, March 1, 1865.

wartime Washington; no other known Copperhead activist had a demonstrable record of repeated physical conflict with Unionists, which underscores a subtle but important point. For all the intense partisan conflict between Unionists and Copperheads, the overall level of actual physical violence was relatively modest. Most opposition was apparently carried out through the political processes, not through direct action, whether organized or spontaneous.

The Union Leagues and their allies were effective enough to help bolster support in the 1863 and 1864 elections for the so-called Unionist party, which were actually the Republicans with a marginal War Democrat addendum. In 1863, Governor Curtin managed to poll 51.4% of the countywide vote, mirroring almost precisely the statewide result. But traditionally Democratic districts generally did not succumb to Unionist rhetoric, with Cross Creek, Jefferson, Hanover, and Nottingham townships, as well as Washington Borough, for example, remaining Democratic strongholds as usual. The Union Leagues did, however, help keep the fragile Republican-War Democrat alliance in an overall electoral majority. The local Democrats' biggest victory in 1863 was their success in electing William Hopkins, the one-time War Democrat who had shifted towards the Copperheads, to the Pennsylvania senate. Nevertheless, for Sergeant Bishop Crumrine, Governor Curtin's majority in the county and statewide was enough to claim political victory in the fall election. Writing to his brother, he inquired as to their father's vote and attitude since the election, speculating that he "must be a little down hearted. I got a letter from home some time ago in which they said I should be at home to see Woodward elected, an also they said so much about the soldiers voting for [Democrats] as though I know nothing of soldiers."⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Bishop Crumrine to Boyd Crumrine, November 1, 1863, Bishop Crumrine Letters, xv-c-32, HAMWJC. George W. Woodward was the Democrat gubernatorial candidate in Pennsylvania in 1863.

The 1863 election results in Washington County gave Republicans a significant comeback from its reversals a year earlier, although the victory had its limits. The Union Leagues doubtlessly rallied the already faithful Republican electorate, likely helped retain many War Democrat allies, and perhaps even converted a few Democrat opponents to the Unionist cause, but most Democrats continued to vote for their party. The Republicans, by now using the name Union Party, whose name implied that the Democrats were the party of disunion, not only succeeded in reelecting Governor Curtin, but captured all available county offices, making Hopkins' election to the state senate less of a blow. However, the so-called Unionist candidates typically edged their Democrat opponents by almost razor-thin margins despite nearly a year of relentless grassroots mobilization across the county, a sustained vigorous rhetorical effort from the local Republican press, and some battlefield progress to boot. Even though the county's Republicans were generally successful in getting their candidates elected, the margins of victory were so small that Democrats were not discouraged, and Republicans were still uncomfortable. Combined with the ever-intensifying war, partisan rivalry and tension continued to accelerate.⁶⁶

The local political atmosphere remained highly charged with anxious emotionalism in the winter and early spring 1864, and the bloody street fight between Ringgold cavalymen and local Copperheads on March 1 only served to exacerbate the rancor. Copperhead opposition remained firmly committed to its general condemnation of the Lincoln administration throughout the year as casualties mounted and the crucial general elections approached. Resolutions passed at a Democratic meeting in Washington Borough in August show a consistent pattern with the criticisms leveled at Lincoln and the Republicans since early in the war. Citing the immense costs of a three year war that had shown no significant progress and should have already been

⁶⁶ James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 599; Wilkes University Election Statistics Project: Pennsylvania Election Statistics, 1682-2006, Pennsylvania Gubernatorial Election Returns, <http://staffweb.wilkes.edu/harold.cox/gov/indexgov.html>

won, the Democrats argued that the conflict was preventable in the first place. They charged Lincoln and the Republicans with abolitionist radicalism and general incompetence, assailed the Emancipation Proclamation as an unconstitutional fraud perpetrated on an unwilling populace, and denounced the evils of conscription. To justify their resolutions, the meeting compiled a long list of Lincoln's abuses, including but not limited to, false imprisonment, violating due process in criminal cases, wantonly violating both First and Fourth Amendment rights, and establishing a military dictatorship, all familiar Copperhead arguments. Finally, the meeting resolved that a peaceful and negotiated settlement to the war was still possible and should be pursued.⁶⁷ Although the county Democratic convention in 1863 had endorsed Clement Vallandigham for president in 1863, the party's choice of George McClellan in 1864 apparently met with their full support. As Philip Shaw Paludan notes, McClellan represented a time when the war was being waged for conservative goals, which meshed well with Washington Democrats' political agenda, and his military credentials would help link the party to the war effort and weaken Republican charges of disloyalty and treason.⁶⁸

Even the return of some of Washington Borough's first three-year volunteers upon their discharge in May 1864 was a cause for political conflict. The Hopkins Infantry, which had become Company K of the 8th Pennsylvania Reserve Infantry, reached the borough on May 25, reduced in number from nearly one hundred in 1862 to a mere fifteen men, the rest having been eliminated from the ranks over the years of campaigning. After lauding the company's battle record and major sacrifices, the *Reporter-Tribune* complained that local Democrats had attempted to pervert the soldiers' homecoming into a purely partisan affair. "Truly it was a strange sight to see these apologists of the rebellion, who had thrown every possible obstacle in

⁶⁷ *Reporter-Tribune*, August 17, 1864.

⁶⁸ Paludan, *A People's Contest*, 247.

the way of our cause, take exclusive charge of the champions just returning from the field, and that, too, in the expressed determination to let no ‘abolitionist’ participate in their kindly greeting,” the Unionist editors complained before expressing their surety that the blatant Copperhead lies and misconduct at the soldiers’ homecoming would be seen for what they were.⁶⁹ Undeterred, Washington’s Copperheads continued their full-scale political assault against their most important foe, the Republicans, throughout the summer, as witnessed by a Democrat meeting in Washington Borough in August 1864, which passed the same set of familiar resolutions that focused various criticisms of President Lincoln, the mishandled war effort, the dangers of emancipation, and conscription’s illegality as the basis for the crusade to remove Lincoln, Curtin, and Republicans in general from power in the fall elections.⁷⁰

Predictably, the Union Leagues and the so-called Union Party spent their energies in concert with the Republican-Unionist *Reporter-Tribune* in countering Democrat accusations and supporting the Lincoln administration throughout the summer and fall of 1864. The Republican/Union Party’s county convention in Washington Borough in June 1864 passed resolutions that are essentially the mirror-image opposites of the Democrat attack points. For example, the county Union Party condemned slavery as the rebellion’s root cause and supported a constitutional amendment to ensure its permanent demise, defended Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation and decision to use black troops, affirmed the constitutionality of Lincoln’s suspension of habeas corpus and other actions taken to ensure the war effort’s integrity, supported an amendment to the state constitution to guarantee soldiers the franchise, and stated their unswerving support for Governor Curtin’s administration in Harrisburg.⁷¹

⁶⁹ *Reporter-Tribune*, June 1, 1864.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, August 17, 1864.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, June 22, 1864.

Political tensions remained so powerful in the fall of 1864 that not even military victories could bring Copperheads and Unionists together even momentarily. For example, in late September Alexander W. Acheson attempted to address an outdoor crowd in Washington Borough after a fireworks display celebrating Sheridan's most recent triumphs in his Shenandoah Valley campaign, but was interrupted with non-stop heckling from anti-war Democrats, who were described by the *Reporter-Tribune* with a variety of invectives, including "rebel sympathizers," "Copperhead rowdies," and "empty-headed brawlers."⁷²

Although the Unionists did not produce a landslide in the 1864 fall elections, the local Democrat tide further receded from its 1862 high-water mark. Not only did the county produce a 52-48% victory for Lincoln, but it also saw Republican majorities in state and congressional votes, as well as county offices. Not even the wounded former infantry captain and Democrat candidate for sheriff, Alexander Wishart, could quite overcome the county's shift back to the Republicans, losing to the incumbent by a mere 175 votes out of 8473 cast. But even with widespread local Republican victories, the Democrats still had some hopeful signs. For instance, of the eleven townships and boroughs that had voted Republican in the 1860 congressional election and switched to the Democrats in 1862, five still voted Democrat in the 1864. Moreover, traditional Democratic strongholds were again largely resistant to Republican-Unionist inroads, as seen in the presidential election, with Cross Creek, Hanover, Jefferson, Smith, and five other townships voting Democrat in excess of 60%.⁷³

Emphasizing the importance of Lincoln's reelection to the war's final outcome, the *Reporter-Tribune* flatly declared, "if McClellan had been elected, the South would have achieved her independence. No doubt of it. We always said so. What a glorious escape we have made by

⁷² *Reporter-Tribune*, September 28, 1864.

⁷³ *Ibid*, October 19, 1864; *Ibid*, November 16, 1864.

defeating him.”⁷⁴ It is likely that both the *Examiner* and the *Review* had made opposite statements favoring McClellan, and although the elections may have produced a catharsis of elation or despair, depending on one’s perspective, the war-inspired partisan hostility maintained its intensity, not only because of the ongoing warfare, but because of the recent violence and acrimony at home, particularly the still-pending Brady murder trial. For his part, Sergeant Bishop Crumrine was disgusted by Washington’s pre-election violence, calling it a disgrace and adding that he “would like to have a company of soldiers there for a while –it would do me more good to fight those Copperheads than you could imagine,” he wrote to his brother on November 12, 1864.⁷⁵ If Crumrine’s bitterness was apparent from distant Delaware, the tension in back in Washington County remained acute throughout the winter and into spring 1865.

When news that Lee had surrendered reached the borough on April 10, 1865, crowds immediately gathered around the court house and held an impromptu meeting featuring speeches, prayers, cheers, and the election of an ad hoc committee to organize an illumination across the borough. Another celebratory meeting was held that evening again at the court house, largely repeating the morning event, but with a larger cast of speakers and an even larger audience.⁷⁶ The *Washington Review*, however, did not see Richmond’s fall and Lee’s surrender as a harbinger for the war’s end, cautioning that the Confederates still had over 150,000 soldiers in the field and vast unconquered territories, predicting that those who believed Lee’s surrender meant the war’s end would shortly be disappointed.”⁷⁷ When the final victory did follow on the heels of Lee’s surrender, the *Reporter-Tribune* expressed outrage that local Copperheads dared associate themselves with the Union’s triumph, and to prove its point, reprinted wartime

⁷⁴*Reporter-Tribune*, November 16, 1864.

⁷⁵ Bishop Crumrine to Boyd Crumrine, November 12, 1864, Bishop Crumrine Letters, xv-c-32, HAMWJC.

⁷⁶ *Reporter-Tribune*, April 12, 1865.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, April 12, 1865.

resolutions passed at various Democrat meetings which had declared the war unwinnable.⁷⁸

Lincoln's assassination shocked the community generally, but some Copperheads expressed delight at the president's death, a fact that enraged Bishop Crumrine. "It seems strange to me that the loyal men of Washington County would permit men to walk about and rejoice in the death of our President," he wrote to his brother, also complaining that he had just read a letter from the village of Eldersville, in Washington's Copperhead northern tier, which openly referred to Lincoln's assassination as "...good news, for he was a damned old fool," leading him to believe that "there are more rebels about Washington County than there are about Richmond."⁷⁹

The 1865 Independence Day celebration in Washington Borough exposed the lingering hostility between Unionists and their erstwhile Copperhead opposition. "Among the rights which the leading Copperheads of Washington County have succeeded in preserving through all the tyranny at which they have railed...for the last three years, is that of making themselves supremely ridiculous," the *Reporter-Tribune* editors commented after William Hopkins and other local Copperheads warmly greeted recently returned soldiers at the borough's combined July 4th and Soldiers' Festival. According to the Republican editors, for the men who had so recently lambasted Lincoln as an incompetent dictatorial radical, labeled Grant a butcher, and derisively referred to the Union army as "Lincoln's hirelings," their professions of thanks and admiration to the veterans was the height of hypocrisy.⁸⁰ Conversely, some local Democrat veterans, like ex-infantry captain and recently defeated candidate for sheriff, Alexander Wishart, viewed the whole Independence Day and Soldiers' Festival as a partisan Republican event,

⁷⁸ *Reporter-Tribune*, April 26, 1865.

⁷⁹ Bishop Crumrine to Boyd Crumrine, May 1, 1865, Bishop Crumrine Letters, xv-c-32, HAMWJC.

⁸⁰ *Reporter-Tribune*, July 5, 1865.

declaring in the *Examiner* on May 29 that he and several like-minded Democrats would refuse to attend.⁸¹

Peace had been restored between North and South, but not between Unionists and Copperheads in Washington, Pennsylvania, where war-generated bitterness lingered throughout 1865 and beyond. In late July, Washington College president, Rev. John W. Scott, who had been so vehemently denounced by the local Copperhead movement during the war, announced his resignation, ostensibly to help facilitate the pending final union between Washington College and nearby Jefferson College by resigning in favor of a new executive chosen by trustees from both institutions.⁸² Shortly after the war's end, the two local Democrat newspapers, the *Review* and the *Examiner*, were consolidated, and by November 1865, John R. Donehoo, the attorney-editor who had piloted the *Examiner* since 1860, left Washington for McConnellsburg, in Fulton County, Pennsylvania, where he ran the Fulton *Democrat* newspaper until 1869. Both cases invite speculation as to motivation for relocation; were these two prominent men merely pursuing new opportunities, or did they also wish to immediately and permanently escape the bitterness and rancor from the war?⁸³

Signs of lingering discord and bad feelings among both Democrats and Republicans is evident in the late 1860s and into 1870s, as seen in the continued spiteful references to Copperheads, radical abolitionists, and rehashing of old wartime arguments in the local press and in personal correspondence, particularly around election times. Indeed, for several years, the local papers refused to drop the wartime labels they had applied to their opposition, with the

⁸¹ Ibid, July 26, 1865.

⁸² Ibid, August 2, 1865.

⁸³ John Mower, et al, *History of Bedford, Somerset, and Fulton Counties, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Waterman, Watkins & Co., 1884), 620; *Washington Review & Examiner*, July 18, 1866.

Reporter-Tribune routinely referring to the Democrats as the Copperhead Party, and the *Review & Examiner* calling the Republicans the Abolitionist or Radical Party.⁸⁴

Personal letters also indicate lingering war-related hostility. For example, in describing the 1866 Washington Borough elections to his then-traveling mother, Alexander W. Acheson, Jr. referred to the Democrats as Copperheads and accused the late Benjamin Brady's brother of plying men with whiskey in exchange for their voting the Democrat ticket in the recent borough elections.⁸⁵ William Hopkins naturally continued to maintain his opposition to Republican policies for the remainder of his state senate term and even after leaving office. Addressing a local convention of Democratic veterans in July 1866, Hopkins affirmed his support for Andrew Johnson's reconstruction program, ridiculed the Republican tariff plank, and urged the convention to support Hiester Clymer for the Pennsylvania gubernatorial campaign, arguing that Clymer had been the soldiers' friend during the war. At the same meeting, ex-captain Alexander Wishart led the committee which wrote resolutions that once again denounced emancipation and the threat of "negro equality," and vigorously opposed black voting rights, thus echoing one of the biggest complaints among local Democrats since 1862.⁸⁶

In the summer of 1868, the now-consolidated *Examiner & Review* newspaper branded the Grand Army of the Republic as a partisan "Radical" organization and mocked their Independence Day celebration in Washington Borough, noting that "like everything else undertaken by the Radicals since the Chicago nomination, it was a dead failure." Later that summer, as Republicans hailed presidential candidate Ulysses Grant as the war's conquering hero, the *Review & Examiner* portrayed him as an incompetent commander who needlessly

⁸⁴ *Reporter-Tribune*, 1865-1870; *Review & Examiner*, 1865-1868.

⁸⁵ Alexander W. Acheson, Jr. to Mary Acheson, March 16, 1866, ed. Fulcher, *Family Letters in a Civil War Century*, 709.

⁸⁶ *Review & Examiner*, July 18, 1866.

wasted time and thousands of lives in a blockheaded strategy which McClellan had been clever enough to avoid; the war would continue to cast its shadow over presidential politics as long as Grant occupied the White House.⁸⁷ As late as 1876, the Washington (PA) *Observer* newspaper, founded just six years earlier, refused to forget the Union's internal wartime struggles, asserting that the "appeal for forgetfulness comes alone from the Democracy. We have not noted a single demand from the Republicans for forgetfulness. That party points proudly to the record of the last sixteen years and asks for the forgetting of nothing."⁸⁸

Although local Democrats and Republicans both continued to wave the bloody shirt periodically, the war's intense emotionalism was bound to fade over time, not only because of the increasing distance from the war years, but also from the return to the familiar local peacetime emphasis on economic and community development, and social stability; undue emphasis on the war increasingly signified a fixation on the past rather than an eye on the present and future. Acrimony and hostility from the war continued to linger, but it played a less decisive role in defining local politics over time. An early example of a slow return to détente on issues not directly partisan or political in nature can be seen in early 1867 when a committee of several leading Washington Borough men organized efforts to elicit material aid to assist famine relief efforts in the former Confederate states. Colin M. Reed, a staunch Republican and wartime Unionist, was selected treasurer and assisted by William Hopkins, a strident former Copperhead, and respected local physician Thomas McKennan, son of the late congressman Thomas M.T. McKennan, to receive and disburse financial contributions. This effort not only demonstrates that partisanship could still be brushed aside for humanitarian or other nonpolitical efforts, but it also demonstrates, as J. Matthew Gallman would note, the enduring pattern of antebellum

⁸⁷ *Review & Examiner*, July 8, 1872; *Ibid*, August 5, 1868.

⁸⁸ *Washington Observer*, September 22, 1876.

Washington society. Just as with old morality enforcement or temperance movements, or as in wartime soldiers' aid societies, the postwar relief effort was coordinated using the time-tested familiar patterns that had characterized community efforts and voluntary associations since the town's beginnings. Local elites filled leadership positions to guide and coordinate the citizenry's voluntary activities; Colin Reed, for example, was not chosen treasurer because of his Unionist or Republican politics, but rather because he was the long-time president of the local Franklin Bank (First National Bank from 1863) and treasurer for the First Presbyterian church, both positions which required a high degree of community trust. Similarly, Hopkins and McKennan were selected as Reed's assistants because they had long-standing solid citizenship and leadership credentials, and even Hopkins' fiercest political critics would not question his honesty or fidelity to duty in a humanitarian effort.

During the war, construction on the stalled Pittsburgh-Steubenville Railroad, which ran through Washington County's northwestern townships, was resumed, with the line finally completed in the spring of 1865. This railroad's revival in 1862 sparked hopes that construction work might resume on the Chartiers Valley Railroad and give Washington Borough its link with Pittsburgh. Although nothing was done on the CVRR during the war, local efforts continued in the postwar years, with ex-Copperheads and former-Unionists joining in common cause to complete this vital transportation improvement. A public meeting held at the county court house in late May 1868 was headed by the same kind of bipartisan cast of local elites from Washington and Canonsburg Borough and townships adjacent to the planned railroad line. Just as in the antebellum period, partisan rivals frequently worked in common cause outside the political arena, whether on economic development, education, temperance, or other community issues.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ *Washington Review & Examiner*, May 27, 1868.

The Alfred Creigh and Boyd Crumrine county histories, published in 1870 and 1882, respectively, may also reflect the post desire to smooth the community's ruffled feathers. Neither author mentioned Copperheads, Union Leagues, the draft and its controversies, emancipation issues, the deadly March 1864 mini-riot, Benjamin Brady's stabbing death, or anything else regarding the war besides the county's regimental muster rolls and battle records, and local aid societies, thus assisting long-term public amnesia regarding wartime infighting. Similarly, following William Hopkins' death at age 69 in 1873, his front-page obituary in the *Reporter* made no references to the war or any controversy surrounding Hopkins' conduct during that time; the focus remained strictly on his accomplishments and achievements despite the fact that one of its remaining editors, William S. Moore, had been a fierce and relentless wartime critic. Indeed, the *Reporter* lauded Hopkins' character and conduct as a man and citizen, noting that he was a "high-toned, genial gentleman, and won the esteem of the whole community for his many amiable traits." A more stark contrast to the wartime attacks on Hopkins as a traitor and southern sympathizer would be difficult to imagine, and the glowing obituary reflects not only a Victorian sense of propriety, but perhaps also a bow to the growing need for civility, if not reconciliation, in the postwar years.⁹⁰

Politically, the Civil War in provincial Washington County, and its administrative and commercial center, Washington Borough, was a time of great division, stress, anger, rivalry, and fevered emotionalism. The rhetoric, activism, and occasional violence that surrounded local Copperheads impacted not only Washington and its environs, but its troops in the field, as seen in the frustrated letters from local soldiers. Washington's anti-war Copperhead movement was

⁹⁰ Alfred Creigh, *History of Washington County, Pennsylvania*, (Harrisburg, PA: B. Singerly, 1871), 300-341; Boyd Crumrine, *History of Washington County*, 310- 365; *Washington Reporter*, March 12, 1873. Shortly after the war, *Tribune* was dropped from the newspaper's name and it once again became just the *Reporter*. Moore's wartime co-editor had sold his interest in the newspaper by 1873.

part of a much larger movement across the Union that had enough influence to help buoy Confederate hopes that a stalemate victory was still possible because of the Union's internal divisions.⁹¹

And yet, despite all the activism and effort by both Unionists and Copperheads, the war did not drastically change partisan loyalties. Washington County in 1860 was a highly competitive political arena with a recent shift towards a slight overall Republican advantage, and in the postbellum period, although the Republicans continued to frequently edge Democrats in county, state, congressional, and presidential elections, their majorities remained relatively modest. Few Democrats abandoned their party despite years of Republican efforts to woo them via the Unionist movement and attempts to associate their party organization with treason. Indeed, Washington County even turned in a slight Democrat majority in the 1866 congressional election, indicating that the party was still a viable opposition force capable of attracting occasional majorities.

Beyond politics, Washington Borough and the most of the surrounding county carried on without significant deviations from antebellum economic or social patterns and trajectories. In the decade or so after the war, most Washington County residents were still living in the rural townships and small boroughs, where they resumed their antebellum patterns. The coal industry had expanded significantly in county's communities along the Monongahela River well before the war, and this established trend would continue after 1865, with the coal industry continuing to expand rapidly. Indeed, the river communities resembled industrial centers with a full-fledged working class and large-scale corporate enterprises well before the county seat, which remained anchored in traditional small scale craft manufacturing and commercial enterprises until the 1880s.

⁹¹ James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 506.

Washington Borough in the postwar period still economically dominated by small independent operators with direct and indirect connections to the local agricultural economy. Although wage laborers certainly existed in the borough, they were still relatively small in number and not yet a clear or conscious class exerting pressure on the community's petty-gentry dominated social-economic system. Most businesses, including manufacturers, were still typically independent small producers with only an assistant or handful of employees. Indeed, of the 57 firms listed in the 1870 Manufactures Census for the borough, thirty were capitalized at under \$1000, and only six manufacturers were capitalized higher than \$10,000. The 30 establishments capitalized at less than \$1000 had an average 1.6 employees, and even the two largest local employers, the Hayes brothers and the Perkins coal mine, had only 35 and 30 employees, respectively, showing that even the larger, more highly capitalized manufacturers still had only a handful of employees. Moreover, a significant portion of the Hayes Carriage workforce consisted of skilled craftsmen rather than mere day laborers.⁹² There is no indication that commercial and service businesses differed from the pattern of small, independent operators with a handful of employees.

Not only did economic and political characteristics survive the war and well into the 1870s, but so did basic social and demographic patterns. With no new large-scale war industries and with most of the county already inhabited and cultivated by small farmers, there was little to attract newcomers, and population growth was relatively modest in the war decade. Washington Borough's population, for example, barely changed between 1860 and 1870, and the entire county's population increased by just under 1700 during the same decade.⁹³

⁹² Department of the Interior, *Ninth US Census Manufactures Manuscript Census for Washington County, Pennsylvania*, June 1870, Pennsylvania State Library Microfilm Collection, Harrisburg, PA.

⁹³ Department of the Interior, *Statistics of the Population of the United States at the Tenth Census, 1880* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), 76.

The Union's wartime state-building process, as Richard Bense, Phillip Paludan, James McPherson, and others argue, did expand Federal and state government authority, and in this sense the war could be interpreted as politically revolutionary for its long-term impact. As James McPherson notes, the antebellum federal Union, in which the central government's size and scope was extremely modest, was transformed into a more centralized Union in which the Federal government assumed much greater importance, and in which the South's political power was sharply curtailed; the Union after 1865 was quite unlike the antebellum Union. However, as Matthew Gallman and other revisionists correctly caution, however, the war's transformational political, economic, and social impacts were felt only gradually in the Union states; small towns and rural communities in particular were not necessarily immediately or significantly impacted in the short run. Even Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Gallman notes, did not experience a fundamental change in its economic, social, or political institutions and patterns.⁹⁴ Although Washington County's coal industry grew substantially in the postwar decades, the rest of the county remained anchored in traditional economic, political, and social patterns, and not until the oil boom in the 1880s did significant industrialization emerge in Washington Borough. The postbellum decade in the Borough was characterized by a general return to prewar patterns, considerations, and concerns. Local development and improvements, ranging from railroads and wool, to education and a revived temperance movement, were the pressing issues as people resumed their peacetime patterns.

The Civil War may not have brought significant deviation from established antebellum political, economic, and social patterns, but it did expose and illustrate the deep divisions existing in wartime southwestern Pennsylvania borderlands; anti-Republican, anti-Lincoln, and

⁹⁴ James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988), 859; J. Matthew Gallman, *Northerners at War*, 67-69.

anti-war sentiment constituted a powerful force, particularly when the Union's military fortunes sagged in 1861-1862, and the local Copperhead activities that grew out of it were strong enough to elicit a fierce reaction from Republicans and their War Democrat allies. These political differences were closely linked to the competing social and economic ideologies that divided Washingtonians. Most Democrats were already suspicious of, and hostile to, the Republican party and its ideology well before the war, and a return to opposition to Lincoln's party and the war it led is not surprising. Peace Democrat societies, the intensity of Unionist counterattacks, including the local network of Union Leagues and the sustained rhetorical offensives conducted by the *Reporter-Tribune*, the private correspondence of soldiers and civilians, and the sporadic violence clashes all attest to a significant Copperhead presence in Washington County, and these political battles demonstrate a certain continuity with the intense prewar local political rivalries. Private letters from local soldiers indicate that the political problems at home had the soldiers' attention and their disapproval. Taken as a whole, the wartime Copperheads were a powerful political force capable of holding the loyalties of a sizable percentage of Washington County's population thanks to a strong prewar Democratic political base as well as sustained and strident attacks on most major Republican wartime measures at both the state and Federal levels. The Copperheads' relentless offensives ensured a strident Republican/Unionist counter-attack and a prolonged, bitter struggle ensued which prevented full focus on the war effort and potentially undermined morale among local men serving in the Union army, and perhaps played its small role in enhancing the Confederate perception that the North was fatally fractured and incapable of brining the war to a successful conclusion.

The Civil War era also demonstrates local society's resilient continuity in the face of unprecedented circumstances, with basic social, economic, and political patterns adapting to

meet wartime exigencies. Traditional patterns from politics and economic patterns, to charitable efforts and gender roles, remained largely intact through the war and even the Reconstruction period. The Republican-sponsored economic changes passed by Congress during the war, including the Homestead Act, the 1863 Bank Act and corporate-friendly business laws, produced no immediate revolutionary local change. Perhaps their cumulative impact would be felt by the 1880s as large-scale industries, particularly oil and glass, and to a lesser extent steel, began locating in and around Washington Borough, and the coal industry expanded not only along the Monongahela River, but in large pockets across the county, but in the years just after the war, most Bank reform, Greenbacks, homestead subsidies, tariffs, and land grant universities lacked the immediacy of wartime measures such as the suspension of habeas corpus, slave emancipation, or conscription and its enforcement. As Washington Borough emerged from the Civil War era, life in most ways resumed its antebellum character, as education, railroads, temperance, and other local development issues soon resumed center stage in public life. Washingtonians in 1865 returned to a world strikingly similar to the one they had known in 1860. Important steps in state-building had been taken during the war years, but their impact on Washington in the immediate postwar period was not keenly felt. At war's end, political divisions certainly persisted, but so too did established economic, demographic, and social patterns. The same elites dominated local politics, the economy, and society, which remained overwhelmingly white, native-born, and Protestant. Despite the immediate sense of upheaval during the wartime years, continuity was remarkably resilient.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Small town case studies frequently reveal different patterns of economic, political, and social development and growth than what existed in large cities and urban areas, and Washington Borough is no different. Washington's history from its incorporation in 1810 to the post-Civil War era demonstrates that scholars on the Market Revolution and Civil War eras must acknowledge that circumstances in individual localities each encountered a unique version of the larger narrative. Washington in this time period is perhaps less dynamic and tumultuous than in a boom town, like Jacksonville, Illinois or Rochester, New York, but its slow transformation into the market economy and modern capitalism, and its relative continuity represents another significant facet of the American experience during this period. Indeed, the average person in western Pennsylvania during this time period was far more likely to live in a small town or its rural hinterland than its rapidly developing regional metropolitan center, Pittsburgh.

Washington's relatively slow growth and low-pressure environment between the 1810s and 1870 should not be confused with stagnation. The town and its surrounding county definitely moved into the modern market-oriented and capitalist-based economy during this period, although under less duress than many places. Indeed, Washington Borough was among western Pennsylvania's pioneers in both commercial agriculture and banking institutions, and its businessmen actively pursuing transportation improvements. Commercial agriculture was already in place by the 1790s, and it accelerated rapidly by the 1820s with burgeoning wool exports. Washington Borough was at least indirectly interested in the wool business, with woolen mills and dealers operating in this local commercial center, and some of its leading citizens, like Francis LeMoyne and John Hoge Ewing personally invested in the wool production and serving prominently in the Washington County Agricultural Society.

At the same time, commercial agriculture, banking, and transportation corporations still retained some small-scale and localized characteristics. Washington County's vast wool production was not the product of a few large absentee-owned farms, but hundreds of relatively small acreage family-owned operations. Likewise, Washington banking institutions retained a semblance of local control. Trusted local men led the state-chartered Bank of Washington and the Franklin Bank, and the same was true for the private banks headed by Samuel Hazlett and William Smith. Other modern market-oriented institutions, like the Washington Steam Mill and the Washington Fire Insurance Company, helped shift the town and surrounding rural area from a subsistence-style economy towards more modern forms; whether providing fulling services or risk management, new locally-owned and operated business institutions were crucial in the community's economic transformation towards commercialization and market production.

Railroad issues were another important local step into the market economy. Unlike the earlier turnpike road corporations that were strictly local affairs, railroad construction required cooperation with its larger neighbors, Pittsburgh and Wheeling, as well as investment from entirely outside the immediate region. Hempfield Railroad securities, for example, were marketed in Philadelphia and possibly Baltimore, and even London, England. The city of Philadelphia subscribed half a million dollars to the Hempfield, something that would have never happened with a turnpike road. Railroad construction also reveals perhaps some of Washingtonians' naivety regarding large-scale development projects, which were vastly more complex in financing, engineering, and operation than earlier developmental corporations had been. Local railroad boosters grossly underestimated the financial difficulties and amount of time it would take to successfully construct even a relatively short railroad, with rosy predictions about money and progress constantly falling short of reality. Indeed, with chronic and ongoing

financial difficulties, the Hempfield was only able to construct the western half of its envisioned line from Wheeling, Virginia, to Greensburg, Pennsylvania, where it was to link with the Pennsylvania Railroad. Without its connection to Greensburg, the truncated Hempfield was a financial failure since it simply could not carry enough tonnage along the isolated line that terminated in Washington. If the Hempfield struggled to carry on with its operations, the Chartiers Valley Railroad was an utter failure, abandoning its construction efforts between Washington Borough and Pittsburgh just two years after its chartering. By the 1860s, far from being on the main east-west railroad lines, Washington had just a single rail link to the smaller of its two neighboring cities, and that company was barely surviving. In addition to high costs, non-local investment, and slow progress, antebellum railroad construction also gave Washingtonians a small foreshadowing of the labor-management conflict that typified modern capitalism and the industrial age, with disputes over wages and worker behavior, complete with intervention by law enforcement.

Even with expanding market forces at work locally, Washington Borough experienced a relatively slow transition under less direct and immediate pressure than many large cities and western boom towns. Washington, too, had significant transience rate among its general population, but its demographic structure remained remarkably stable. In 1870, the population's overwhelming majority were still native born Protestant Pennsylvanians; few immigrants were attracted to the settled farmlands and small towns that comprised Washington County, and even its political seat and local commercial hub held out few opportunities for immigrants when compared with the possibilities presented by boom towns, large cities, or frontier farmlands. As late as the 1870s, Washington Borough's economy was still firmly anchored in small business and without any large-scale industry. Not until the century's final two decades and the beginning

of true industrialization did Washington Borough's demographic stability give way to a much larger, more fluid and diverse populace.

Similarly, the Civil War produced an explosive and highly contentious political environment in Washington Borough and the wider county as it was fought, but it did not produce any fundamental or lasting changes to the community. The well-established pattern of partisan conflict was never fully muted, even in the heady days of spring and early summer 1861, with a small but vocal anti-war element already outlining themes that became familiar Copperhead arguments later in the conflict. By 1862, a large portion of Washington County's Democrats were turning against either the war itself or at least Lincoln's alleged mismanagement, prompting equally strident counterattacks from local Republicans. Across the county and in the Borough, political meetings on the war followed well-established patterns from prior decades, and the same political elite continued to act as spokesmen for their respective causes. Washington Borough attorney and future judge Alexander W. Acheson, for example, an already well-established community leader, was perhaps the single most prominent Unionist speaker, squaring off against anti-war and anti-Lincoln Copperheads led by their party's well known and established leaders, like William Hopkins. Washington's Copperheads, like most of their compatriots across Pennsylvania and other Union states, were not treasonous or disloyal, but instead believed that they were defending traditional republican values, the Constitution, social order, and the Union itself, which they believed could not be restored through brute force.

Despite all the sound and fury in the Borough and across the county during the war years, things quickly resumed their pre-war character after the Confederacy's defeat. Reconstruction issues continued to be debated as a political issue, to be sure, but they did not carry the same emotional intensity that wartime politics had, and debate over national issues resumed its less

explosive antebellum patterns. Political violence also came to a swift halt at war's end; there were no more riots, shootings, or stabbings in Washington Borough, no draft enforcers to shoot at from corn fields, no more confrontations between soldiers and Copperheads, and physical violence was replaced again by rhetorical dueling. After the war, the town turned its attention back to local development and improvement issues, ranging from completing the Hempfield and the Chartiers Valley Railroads to water supply improvements and a renewed temperance crusade. The town was institutionally and demographically virtually unchanged from the wartime experience; no new or expanded industries developed, no major population shifts occurred, and political patterns retained their basic form, adjusting only in the subjects being debated and emotional intensity. By the 1870s, the bloody shirt was fading from local politics.

In the long period between the frontier days and the rise of factories and industrialization, Washington, Pennsylvania, grew, adapted, and changed at a much more leisurely pace than in boom towns. With the frontier areas already far to Washington's west by the early 1800s, and without any significant industrial production to attract large numbers of newcomers, the town experienced far less direct and immediate pressure from the market revolution's growing significance and power. Lacking an industrial base, rapid population growth, or shifting social demographics, Washington Borough had an underlying stability as it adjusted to the new world unfolding around it in the early and middle 1800s. Conflicts over economic, political, and social issues, whether tariffs, banking, temperance, or railroads, did not tear at the community's basic fabric, and social order was rarely threatened to any serious degree. Even during the Civil War, when emotional tensions ran high, leading to some sporadic violence, the established political and legal institutional framework withstood the pressure and survived the war. By 1870, it was clear that the war's impact had been mostly short-term. At the start of the century's final third,

Washington had grown and developed in many ways; it had joined the cash/credit nexus, served as an important local commercial hub amidst a commercialized farming county, and it was reentering the railroad construction game with the intent to finish the Chartiers Valley Railroad to Pittsburgh and complete the Hempfield's eastern branch to Greensburg. And yet, the town also bore striking continuities. With about 1000 people at the time of its incorporation in 1810, Washington's population growth, like other small western Pennsylvania towns, proceeded relatively slowly, only breaking the 2000 mark in 1850, and still well under 4000 by 1870. Unlike its rapidly growing neighbors like Wheeling and Pittsburgh, Washington's institutions and patterns were not under assault by a swelling tide of newcomers who could fundamentally alter the town's character. The utter lack of industrialization made Washington an unlikely home for immigrants, and indeed, in 1870, most of its population remained native-born Pennsylvanians. Insulated from excessive direct pressure, neither the market revolution nor the Civil War produced major disruptions to Washington's character during the long middle period between frontier and factory.

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