Town Development in Early Western Pennsylvania

By R. Eugene Harper

The first indications of urbanization in western Pennsylvania were the appearance of town lots on the tax assessment records of local townships in the 1790s. The beginning of town life at very early stages in the development of a region is not surprising. It is now clear that some measure of urban development was basic to the westward movement and frontier experience from the beginning. While in this early stage, the effect that towns had on the overwhelmingly agrarian society was not great; nevertheless, the process of urbanization did significantly impact the economic, political and social patterns of the region.

Town lots made available an inexpensive form of land ownership that attracted a variety of people, from laboring men to speculators. A number of enterprising proprietors laid out towns at strategic locations in the hope that fate and foresight would join to ensure them economic advantage. Certain mill sites or river crossing points seemed automatically to draw a core of people, and alert landowners soon platted towns and began to sell lots to willing buyers. Seats of local government had to be erected, and the choice of a particular site could be very beneficial to those who had power to influence the final decision. Even subsistence frontier areas had nascent mercantile networks for which the new towns became obvious locations. Beyond these initial considerations, a small successful town attracted craftsmen and artisans. Successful mercantile activity attracted more businessmen. The choice of where to locate religious, educational or intellectual institutions was often affected by the location of towns.

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1 The standard statement of the role of towns in western development is Richard C. Wade, The Urban Frontier: The Rise of Western Cities, 1790-1830 (Cambridge, Mass., 1959). Although Wade is concerned with the larger towns — Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville — the same patterns hold for the smaller towns of western Pennsylvania.
Within the towns there began to develop micro-class structures of local leaders and working people. All of these factors were at work in the early growth and development of western Pennsylvania.

**Western Pennsylvania Towns and the Town Building Process**

Before considering the impact towns had on the frontier society of western Pennsylvania, it is necessary to understand something about the process of town development in the region. This study will focus on the towns of Washington County (which then included Greene County) and Fayette County. Local tax assessment records which provide the basic source for this study are available for these counties but absent for Westmoreland and Allegheny counties.\(^2\) By 1796, there were nine towns in Fayette County: Uniontown, Brownsville, Hayden-town, Hopwood, East Liberty, Connellsville, Bridgeport, New Haven and New Geneva; and eight towns in Washington County: Washington, Cannonsburg, Fredericktown, Greensboro, Carmichaels, Burgetts-town, Monongahela, Waynesburg.\(^1\)

All towns were located on a water supply. Nine were on rivers,

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\(^2\) The original tax assessment records for the 1790s are extant for all of Washington County, which included Greene County until after 1796, and for all of Fayette County except Menallen Township and Union Township. In general, assessments for Washington County are those for 1793 and for 1796 in Fayette County unless otherwise stated. As a rule, specific citation of these assessments will not be made in the footnotes, to avoid redundancy. Original tax records for Westmoreland County are not extant before 1800, and Allegheny County unfortunately lost most of its early records in a late nineteenth century fire. A broader study of the socio-economic development of the western Pennsylvania frontier is Robert Eugene Harper, "The Class Structure of Western Pennsylvania, 1783-1790," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1969.

\(^3\) An additional town, West Alexander in Donegal Township, Washington County, was technically platted in 1796, but settlement was delayed — partially due to a court suit — until the turn of the century. (Boyd Crumrine, ed., *History of Washington County* [Philadelphia, 1882], 747.) Some doubt exists concerning the founding dates of some towns. The Fayette County history states that Haydantown was not laid out until after 1790. (Franklin Ellis, ed., *History of Fayette County* [Philadelphia, 1882], 567.) However, two town lots appeared on the Georges Township assessment in 1787, and no other town existed in the township. The town may have begun on a small scale at the earlier date. Bridgeport was reported as founded in 1794 (Ellis, *Fayette County*, 465-66), but a deed from the proprietor to Jacob Beeson for lots numbered 1 and 31 was dated 1793. (Fayette County Deed Book A., 450.) In Washington County, the date for the founding of Greensboro was given as 1781 by Greene County historian Samuel P. Bates, *Greene County* (Chicago, 1888), 521; but a collection of newspaper columns by Andrew J. Waychoff, *Local History*, published by the Democratic Messenger of Waynesburg, n.d., articles no. 34 and no. 139, gives the date as 1791, and so does Solon J. and Elizabeth H. Buck, *The Planting of Civilization in
and the other eight were located on smaller streams. Several river towns were also at the mouths of tributary streams or very close to tributary streams, which provided additional sources of water for human needs or power for mills. Water was also a source of transportation for the river towns and for Cannonsburg at certain periods of the year, but all towns had important road connections.

Five of these towns were on (or near, in the case of Bridgeport) what became the famous National Road. Connellsville and New Haven were on opposite sides of Stewart’s Crossing, which had become a state road. Monongahela, then called Parkinson’s Ferry, was also located on a principal road, situated where the Glade Road from Bedford to Washington crossed the river. Three towns lay on important secondary roads south into Virginia. Two of them, New Geneva and Greensboro, lay on what Albert Gallatin called “the nearest portage from the western waters to the Potowmack and the Federal City.” On important local roads were others such as Cannonsburg, on the road from Pittsburgh to Washington, or East Liberty, on the road from Uniontown to Greensburg. Only two towns in the more remote border regions of settlement lacked through transportation, having instead terminal roads that connected them with the more settled portions of the county.

*Western Pennsylvania* (Pittsburgh, 1939), 149, 218. The latter must be correct since only six lot owners were assessed in 1796. One of the lot owners in 1796 was Albert Gallatin who was assessed for 54 lots while no other person had more than six. Henry Adams in his *Life of Albert Gallatin* (1879; reprint ed., New York, 1943), 152-53, recorded that in 1795 Gallatin bought all the remaining lots in and 20 acres of bottom land around Greensboro, which lay directly across the river from his town site that he was developing at the same time. Gallatin’s town, New Geneva, was not officially platted until 1797, but a small settlement including a mill and boatyards had already begun there before he purchased the land and then formalized its development. No founding date has been found for Carmichaels in Bates, *Greene County*, and Washington County historians did not include Greene County areas when they discussed local subdivisions. Since no towns were apparently founded earlier, the few town lots found on the Cumberland Township assessment of 1793 have been assumed to be in Carmichaels, and its founding date was probably a year or two before. One final town, Finleyville in Nottingham Township, was supposedly founded in 1788, according to Joseph F. McFarland, *Washington and Washington County* (Chicago, 1910), 436. Crumrine, *Washington County*, 965, gave no founding date but indicated that founder James Barclay was only licensed to operate a tavern in that year. Since no town lots appeared in Nottingham in 1793, since there was no Finley for whom the town was supposedly named, and since Barclay was assessed for only 100 acres, and that in neighboring Peters Township, it appears doubtful that any formal town was laid out during the period under study.

4 Adams, *Gallatin*, 152.
A number of towns were mill sites, and mills and local industry seemed to be significant factors associated with early town foundings. Water, of course, attracted the mills, but generally fabricating and commerce came after towns were established. The one major exception, however, was Gallatin’s town of New Geneva, which he laid out directly in conjunction with his glass works. New Geneva in its early days was the closest approximation to an industrial or “company” town in the region.  

The process of establishing a town in western Pennsylvania was much different from the well-known pattern of New England. Towns were not established by a corporate body, and the state legislature took no part in the process. Instead, the normal pattern was for an individual proprietor on his own initiative to lay out a town plat on his own land and to offer lots for sale to the public. Sometimes a public lottery was used in the selection of lots, and after newspapers were established in Fayette and Washington counties in the late 1790s, town lots were advertised in the papers. Town lots were of various sizes, and sometimes of irregular shape, but generally they contained 1/4 acre. Lots in Greensboro and perhaps in Hopwood were 1/2 acre in size, and in Washington the size was about 1/8 acre. Lots in Uniontown, Burgettstown, and Brownsville were 1/4 acre; lots in New Geneva were a little under 1/4 acre; and those in Haydantown were also apparently 1/4 acre. Bridgeport lots varied from around 1/4 to 1/2 acre, while those in Connellsville varied from 1/4 to 1/6 acre in size.

In addition, towns normally had large lots of ground surrounding the town called out lots. These out lots served as pasture for the livestock of the town dwellers, as room for town expansion, and as investments for speculators. The size of out lots varied greatly. In Connellsville, the proprietor set aside 100 acres divided into out lots of 1 to 4 acres to be used “for pasture.” An out lot sold to John Clark in Bridgeport was somewhat larger than 1 acre. Shopkeepers Isaac

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5 Information on town location has been gleaned from several sources and from personal experience. The county histories have information on each town. See the appropriate subdivision in Ellis, Fayette County, and Crumrine, Washington County, passim. Buck and Buck, Western Pennsylvania, 218-19, also has a brief description of towns.

6 Ellis, Fayette County, 281, 424; Crumrine, Washington County, 819.

7 Bates, Greene County, 521; Ellis, Fayette County, 686; Crumrine, Washington County, 476-77.

8 James Hadden, A History of Uniontown (Uniontown, Pa., 1913), 12; Crumrine, Washington County, 917; Fayette County Deed Book C-2, 631 and C-3, 1131; Ellis, Fayette County, 426, 567.

9 Fayette County Deed Book A, 450; B, 336; C-1, 451; C-2, 631.
### TABLE 1
**Location of Towns Established in Fayette and Washington Counties by 1796**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Township</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>River</th>
<th>Creek</th>
<th>Road</th>
<th>Industry Site</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Uniontown</td>
<td>Union</td>
<td>1776</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>ml</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brownsville</td>
<td>Menallen</td>
<td>1785</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>p</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haydentown</td>
<td>Georges</td>
<td>1787?</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>ml, i</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopwood</td>
<td>Union</td>
<td>1791</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>p</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Liberty</td>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>1792</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>l</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connellsville</td>
<td>Bullskin</td>
<td>1793</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Luzerne</td>
<td>1794</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>Franklin</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Geneva</td>
<td>Springhill</td>
<td>1797</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>g</td>
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<td><strong>Washington County</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Separate</td>
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<td>Cannonsburg</td>
<td>Chartiers</td>
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<td>o</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fredericktown</td>
<td>E. Bethlehem</td>
<td>1790</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Greensboro</td>
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<td>o</td>
<td>s</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Burgettstown</td>
<td>Smith</td>
<td>1795</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>ml</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monongahela</td>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>p</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waynesburg</td>
<td>Greene</td>
<td>1796</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>t</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LEGEND:**
- River: M — Monongahela River; Y — Youghiogheny River
- Creek: o — located on an important creek; h — at the head waters; m — at the mouth
- Roads: p — on a principal state or interstate road
  s — on an important secondary road with interstate connections
  l — on an important local road connecting local centers
  t — terminal points of local roads connecting with local centers
- Industry: ml — mill site; g — Gallatin's enterprises — store, mill, glass works; i — iron forge

The town of Washington had its own separate jurisdiction. Also, present-day names and spellings have been used for the towns regardless of their original name or subsequent names.
Jenkinson and Jesse Townsend each owned a 4-acre out lot in Fredericktown in addition to their several town lots. Around the town of Washington, lots were even more varied in size. In Strabane Township, lots of 1, 5, 7, and 10 acres were assessed; and in Canton Township, lots of 3\frac{1}{2}, 5, and 10 acres were found as well as two lots totalling 13 acres and two totalling 15 acres.\(^\text{10}\)

The cost of town lots and their assessed value varied also. Henry Beeson sold lots in Uniontown for 40\(/\) [shillings] in 1776 and £5 Pennsylvania money in the 1780s, but his brother, Jesse, had to pay £7.10 for a lot in Bridgeport a decade later. (Values on the tax assessments were not denominated in dollars until 1796, when the conversions generally were made at £3 equals $8, or £1 equals $2.67. In the traditional English system, a pound contained 20 shillings and a shilling contained 12 pence.) Lots in Connellsville and Canonsburg, however, sold for only £3, and in Greensburg, lots were 45\(/\). Burgettstown lots were advertised as selling for only $4 to $6 (£1.10-£2.5).\(^\text{11}\)

The assessed value of unimproved town lots in Washington County in 1793 ranged from £5 to £7.10. In Fayette County, unimproved lots ranged in value from $10 to $30 (£3.15-£11.5) in 1796.

The purchaser of a town lot was under certain obligations beyond his purchase price. In nearly every case, quit rents were due annually, although there were some cases in which they could be eliminated by paying a lump sum. Most quit rents were half a dollar (3/9), and in Hopwood, the rent could be paid in coin or with a bushel of wheat, which normally sold for 4\(/\).\(^\text{12}\) Occasionally, the quit rent was higher, such as the whole dollar required in Washington and Cannonsburg.\(^\text{13}\)

Lot owners were often required to build upon their lot within two years. In Hopwood, five years was the allowed time span, and in Fredericktown, owners of multiple lots had to erect only one house for every two lots owned within the two-year period. Houses had to be of a minimum size, in some cases 16x24 feet, but in others 18 or 20 feet square was allowed. Always the chimney was required to be constructed of brick or stone.\(^\text{14}\)

\(^{10}\) Fayette County Deed Book C-3, 1362; B, 356.
\(^{11}\) Hadden, Uniontown, 12, 14; Fayette County Deed Book A, 450; C-1, 451; C-2, 631; Crumrine, Washington County, 607; Westmoreland County Deed Book B, 287; Pittsburgh Gazette, April 4, 1795.
\(^{12}\) Hadden, Uniontown, 12, 14; Crumrine, Washington County, 477, Ellis, Fayette County, 424, 686; Fayette County Deed Book C-1, 451.
\(^{13}\) Crumrine, Washington County, 477, 607.
\(^{14}\) Ellis, Fayette County, 686; Appearance Docket, Court of Common Pleas, Washington County, 1793; Crumrine, Washington County, 477, 607; Fayette County Deed Book A, 450.
Town proprietors had certain obligations also. They promised to issue a clear deed. Access to drinking water and to any public landing was guaranteed. Proprietors normally gave townsmen free access to neighboring lands for building stone, lumber, firewood, and coal, if any was near. At times, proprietors imposed stipulations upon certain enterprises. No distillery or ferry was allowed in Fredericktown, and no ferry could be erected at Connellsville. There was scarcely a town plat that did not designate one or more lots for public use, normally for education and/or religious use. Some proprietors even guaranteed financial support for education. Zachariah Connell, for example, pledged his first four years' quit rents to erect a school and meeting house, and Thomas Hopwood also made a sizeable pledge towards an academy in his town. Thus, the proprietors were interested in making their towns attractive to purchasers, and in insuring that the basic needs of the townspeople would be met. Only in that way could their venture prosper.

There is little doubt that town proprietors desired their towns to prosper. They were, in fact, some of the most important and enterprising men in each county. The typical town proprietor was a middle-aged, well-established settler. As Table 2 indicates, most of them settled in western Pennsylvania in the 1770s or early 1780s, normally a decade or more before they laid out their towns. Almost invariably the proprietor was a member of the landed and economic elite, ranking within the top decile of his respective township in both land and total taxable wealth. Many of them had other business interests. Nearly

15 Appearance Docket, Court of Common Pleas, Washington County, 1793; Fayette County Deed Book, C-3, 1362.

16 Hadden, Uniontown, 12; Ellis, Fayette County, 686; Crumrine, Washington County, 607; Waychoff, Local History, no. 139; Fayette County Deed Book C-3, 1362; Appearance Docket, Court of Common Pleas, Washington County, 1793.

17 John and William Hoge were the exceptions. Their father laid out the town of Washington in 1781 as a speculative venture when he learned the county would be established that year. He never left his Carlisle home, but the sons did and became official proprietors in 1785. Only the older son, John, has been singled out for discussion, but William was only slightly less prominent. Crumrine, Washington County, 476-79.

18 Even the exceptions proved the rule. Frederick Wise and George Burgett were second generation settlers whose fathers' large lands had been subdivided by 1793. The older Wise had 400 acres originally, and Sebastian Burgett had 650 acres before his accidental death. Both were major holdings, and by 1796, Wise's heirs had moved back into the top decile in taxable wealth. Joseph Parkinson did lack land, but he was a merchant and ferryman where the important Glade Road crossed the Monongahela. He owned two slaves, and his settlement was one of the real hotbeds of opposition
all who did had mills, and Cadwallader owned three mills. Meason and Hayden were ironmasters. Gallatin owned his mercantile establishment and glass works, while Parkinson was a merchant and ferryman. Their economic position made them prominent citizens, and opened real possibilities for political office for those who so desired. Gallatin, Meason, Cannon, and Hoge all held state government offices, and Gallatin attained national prominence. Connell held local office, and five could add military experience to, or in lieu of, political experience.

The Role of the Towns in Frontier Society

The small towns on the western Pennsylvania frontier played several important roles in that frontier society. They served as trading centers, gathering together a variety of skills and services in one place. The towns also provided opportunities for the common laborers and dependent peoples to find work and achieve some measure of economic security. Town real estate provided a new source of investment to replace the dwindling supply of unseated lands, and provided an opportunity for some of the poorer members of society to become property owners for the first time. For selected towns, providing the services of government was a most important role. Finally, towns, in general, provided a veneer of artistic and intellectual activity to cover the general crudeness of frontier life.

Probably the most important role played by nascent frontier towns was to operate as a marketing center for the exchange of goods and services. In one convenient place a variety of skills, professional services and market opportunities were clustered together. Many towns had milling facilities in or near them, but towns also very early drew together a number of artisans and a few professional people.


19 Ellis, Fayette County, 365-66, 465-66, 502-3, 512, 567, 766-68; Crumrine, Washington County, 476-79, 565-67, 601-3, 679, 917-18; Bates, Greene County, 521; Waychoff, Local History, nos. 95, 139; Lecky, Pioneer Families, 2:41-42. Those proprietors not included here because specific assessment data was lacking for them fit the same picture. Thomas Hopwood had 400 acres; Henry Beeson (Uniontown) had multiple landholdings, a mill, and held office; Thomas Brown had multiple landholdings. Ellis, Fayette County, 279-81, 421-24, 686; Hadden, Uniontown, 10-11. Only Waynesburg lacked a proprietor. Here five trustees were appointed by the state assembly to select a site for the county town when Greene County was erected. Statutes at Large, XV, Ch. MDCCCLXX, 383.
Uniontown, for example, had approximately 20 artisans and shopkeepers by 1783, just seven years after its founding and in spite of the Revolutionary War. By the mid-1790s, although the exact number of artisans is unknown, Uniontown had added such new trades as potters, tailors, a breeches maker, a silversmith, and a brewer. Brownsville had more than a half dozen merchants and shopkeepers by the mid-1790s, and its strategic river location made it one of the most important boat-building centers in all of the West.

Travelers' reports at the turn of the century indicated that these towns continued their growth. Brownsville, by 1803, included the first paper mill west of the mountains, a ropewalk, a brewery, and several other manufactures, while her port facilities provided a commercial outlet for some two dozen mills situated within a few miles of the town. Uniontown, by 1803, was doing such a mercantile business that traveler Thaddeus M. Harris believed it was the most flourishing town west of the mountains besides Wheeling and Pittsburgh.

The growth of Pittsburgh and Washington also centered in trade and manufacturing. Pittsburgh's unique river location determined that her early life would be dominated by traders. George Washington found the town primarily inhabited by "Indian Traders" in 1770. Fourteen years later, Dr. Schoepf found that Pittsburghers were still making money by dealing "extortionately with strangers and travelers" who interrupted "their comfortable sloth." Nevertheless, industry became increasingly important in Pittsburgh and provided, by the end of the century, the real basis for its spectacular growth from a lazy town of traders to a major western city.

The town of Washington apparently developed more rapidly than Pittsburgh, and for its first decade or more was Pittsburgh's greatest rival. In 1792, The American Museum or Universal Magazine reported that Washington had a greater variety of artisans and retailers than Pittsburgh. Twenty-three different skills were listed for Washington as against only 17 for Pittsburgh, although Pittsburgh did have about 20 per cent more in total number. Both towns could claim such nonessential trades as a clock maker and a silversmith, whose clientele

20 Ellis, Fayette County, 282-86.
21 Ellis, Fayette County, 425-27; Wade, The Urban Frontier, 41.
TABLE 2  
Characteristics of Town Proprietors  
Washington and Fayette Counties, 1793-1796  

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<th>Town</th>
<th>Proprietor</th>
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<th>W</th>
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</table>

**LEGEND:** L — Ranked in top 10% of landowners in township; W — Ranked in top 10% of township residents in total taxable wealth; B — Other Business; S — Political/Military Service.

were undoubtedly drawn from the richer members of society. By 1790, Washington could boast 16 retailers and more than 30 persons dealing in mercantile pursuits, in addition to 93 different artisans and tradesmen, including such new trades as two Windsor chair makers and three coppersmiths.²⁴

It is unfortunate that detailed tax information was so lacking for these major towns, but examining the smaller towns can indicate what probably occurred initially in the larger towns. Here again, the importance of merchants, artisans, and nascent industry was found. In Cannonsburg, for example, a doctor, two merchants, a shoemaker, a tanner, a cooper, and a tavern keeper were among the first 12 to purchase lots. Merchant Isaac Jenkinson was probably the leading organizer of Fredericktown after the untimely death of proprietor

²⁴ Crumrine, Washington County, 484-92.
Frederick Wise. Possibly no town in western Pennsylvania owed its beginnings more directly to industry than New Geneva, Gallatin’s town built primarily to facilitate his business ventures.  

Three towns, in particular — Bridgeport, Connellsville, and Fredericktown — had original assessments in sufficient detail to study closely who owned the initial lots. As Table 3 indicates, 14 percent of the lot owners were involved in mercantile activities of some sort — shopkeepers, retailers, tavern keepers, clerks, and merchants. Another 37 percent were skilled artisans, and in Fredericktown, fully 50 percent of the lot owners were artisans. Even in these small towns, an emerging professional class already owned 6 percent of the lots. Thus, there can be little doubt that serving as a center for the distribution of goods and services was one of the earliest and primary functions of these nascent frontier towns.

A second important role played by the early towns was to provide economic opportunity for the lower classes. The precise influence that towns had upon poorer people is nearly impossible to determine; nevertheless, dependent persons who lacked specific skills or profession comprised 20 percent of the lot owners in these three small towns. A few of these dependents were widows. Widow Mahaffey of Connellsville and her two sons, both without any skill, each owned a lot in Connellsville. For her sons, the town probably provided more opportunity for common labor than living in the hills of Bullskin Township, and for her, the town probably meant security not found in a lonely cabin. To “Black Bobb,” the river town of Bridgeport offered the opportunity to become a property owner — probably for the first time in his life — as well as a place for him to find employment as a common laborer. In the town of Washington, another black laborer, Ignatius Hewitt, was able to buy a lot, but fellow laborer, Shadrack, had not yet been so fortunate. Several lot owners were young single freemen. Towns gave some of these young men opportunities for work and their first stake in society. Most single men, however, did not own property. In the town of Washington, for example, 23 of 31 landless persons were single men. Many of these young men probably joined those who moved on to the next town on the next frontier. Others, however, stayed, found worthwhile jobs, and became permanent town residents. For all of these laboring dependent people, the important factor had to be the low initial cost of

25 Crumrine, Washington County, 607, 769; Appearance Docket, Court of Common Pleas, Washington County, 1793; Ellis, Fayette County, 772; Buck and Buck, Western Pennsylvania, 218.
a town lot compared with the cost of beginning a small farm. Towns
gave the unskilled opportunities for employment and property owner-
ship that they may not have found elsewhere.

The establishment of new towns provided a third function in
frontier society — they opened up a new form of real estate invest-
ment. Particularly in townships where settlement had claimed virtually
all of the unseated land, town lots provided a new, low-cost form
of property. Speculators were attracted to this low-cost property as
readily as the lower classes. In fact, 22 percent of the lot owners in the
three small towns were speculators. In the town of Washington, only
7 percent of the lot owners were speculators, but the list of persons
owning the larger out lots around the town was full of investors,
many of them local leaders. In the three small towns, a few investors
were yeomen farmers who may have bought to establish a son in
business or just for profit. Other speculators lived outside the town-
ship. In Bridgeport, for example, the speculators included a Brownsville
businessman, two residents of neighboring Menallen Township, and
two Washington County residents. In Fredericktown, the specula-
tors included the President Judge of the Western Pennsylvania Judicial
Circuit, an eastern speculator with large holdings in the border town-
ships, plus residents of the town of Washington, of neighboring
Cumberland Township, and of Fayette County. The same was true of
Connellsville, where such people as residents of Washington and
Westmoreland counties, one from New Jersey, and a Uniontown
Justice of the Peace were among the lot owners.

The low initial price was one feature that attracted many persons to
town lots, but for the investor, the potential appreciated value was
equally important. That these lots appreciated greatly was evident in
a case brought before the Washington County Court. Merchant John
Acheson sold a lot he owned in the town of Washington to Samuel
Acklin in October 1789. Acklin was to pay annually a minimum of
£3.7.6 in marketable beef, pork, wheat, or whiskey; upon payment of
£50 (£40 if Acklin could pay it off within a year) a deed would be
issued. What improvements Acheson may have made before selling
were not stated, but the appreciated value was obvious. In 1793, when
many lots in Washington were assessed for £7.10, Samuel Acklin was
assessed for a £40 lot. The same £40 in neighboring Strabane Town-
ship was the assessed value of farms ranging from 100 to 250 acres.
New towns, therefore, did provide excellent opportunities for invest-

26 Acheson's death necessitated a court order to issue the deed to Acklin. Appearance Docket, Court of Common Pleas, Washington County, Mar. 1794.
ment, and a number of enterprising people took part, no doubt gladdening the heart of each town proprietor in the process.

For some frontier towns, serving as the seat of government added another very important function to those already provided. Being a county seat meant that many other people, who probably would not have come otherwise, had to come to the county seat to avail themselves of the various services of government. People came to probate a will or to record a deed. To collect a bounty on wolves or squirrels, the hunters came; to register their flour brands, the millers came. Many interested citizens came to visit old friends and to learn the latest news during the quarterly sessions of court. Still others came to the county seat to initiate a suit or to answer a suit for some alleged wrong, to collect a debt, to petition insolvency, or to pay taxes. Some voters, too, had to come to the county town for elections.

Considering the many people guaranteed to come to a county seat town, and considering the speculative, enterprising mentality of the proprietary class, it should not be surprising that the choice of county seats was contested. In nearly every case, the selection of the county seat involved some pre-design on the part of enterprising men. Pittsburgh, alone, was a truly important town when it was designated county seat of Allegheny County in 1788. Pittsburgh, located at the western edge of Westmoreland County, had long felt itself unduly subservient to the county seat, Hannastown, thirty miles to the east. The burning of Hannastown in 1782 and the subsequent internal struggle within Westmoreland County over the location of a new county seat gave Pittsburghers their opportunity. Pittsburgh lawyer Hugh H. Brackenridge had been elected to the legislature in 1786, partially on a platform to make Pittsburgh a new county seat. Brackenridge's political differences with his fellow Westmoreland representative, the powerful William Findley, also may have entered the

27 Washington County paid £648.2.8 and £464.6.8 in wolf and squirrel bounties, respectively, from 1783 through 1788. Treasurer's Account, Docket, Court of Quarter Sessions, Dec. 1789. Several brands were registered with the courts. See the Docket, Court of Quarter Sessions, Washington County, Sept. 1786, Jan. 1793, Mar. 1794.
29 In the 1780s, especially, many people were apparently "willing to run in debt and go to law." Letter of Ephraim Douglas to Gen. James Irvine, Feb. 1784, quoted in Ellis, Fayette County, 283-84. However, a full tabulation of all debt cases in the courts revealed no untoward amount of debt in the 1780s. When Westmoreland and Washington Counties were established, the whole county did vote in the county town, and only later were election districts provided. Statutes at Large, VIII, Ch. DCLXXVIII (Feb. 26, 1773), 315; X, Ch. CMXXXI (Mar. 28, 1781), 273.
struggle. Within a few weeks, the bill creating Allegheny County with Pittsburgh as its county seat made its appearance in the legislature, and Findley and Brackenridge, ostensibly for other reasons, crossed political swords. Pittsburgh, however, was simply too important to be denied.\textsuperscript{10}

Uniontown also had been established before the need for a county seat arose, but apparently not without some hopeful design toward the future. Within two years after Henry Beeson settled in 1767, Alexander McClean, a surveyor and later the county's Register of Wills and Recorder of Deeds, was suggesting to Beeson that the site would be suitable for a county town. After first building a mill, Beeson laid out the town in 1776. It languished during the war, but when the need for a new county seat arose in 1783, Uniontown was the only logical choice.\textsuperscript{31}

In Westmoreland and Washington counties, the choice of a county seat was even more the result of strong-willed men. When Westmoreland County was erected in 1773, the house of Robert Hanna on Forbes Road was designated as the site for holding court; Hanna was made a Justice of the Peace and placed on a five-man commission to select a permanent site. The "strong-minded Irishman of great shrewdness" saw to it that the commission never found another site. However, the burning of Hannastown in 1782 and the location of the state road a few miles to the south thwarted Hanna's design. Still, a second commission and then a third could not agree on a new site until three other prominent men worked out a solution personally beneficial to themselves. William Jack and Christopher Truby, both county officials, agreed with their neighbor and commission member, Michael Rugh, to sell 2 acres of land to the county for public buildings for the nominal sum of six pence. Jack and Truby would then also mark off 60 acres of their own land into town lots, and sell them to the public, while Rugh oversaw the court construction. The two commission members from the southern part of the county went along, but the two from the northern part refused to have anything to do with the proceedings. Nevertheless, Greensburg became the county seat and Hannastown never rose from its ashes.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{30} Statutes at Large, XIII, Ch. MCCCLIX (Sept. 24, 1788), 84-87; John N. Boucher, History of Westmoreland County, I (New York, 1906), 49, 191; Claude M. Newlin, The Life and Writings of Hugh Henry Brackenridge (Princeton, 1932), 73, 76, 78-80, 85.
\textsuperscript{31} Statutes at Large, XI, Ch. MXVI (Sept. 22, 1783), 196; Ellis, Fayette County, 279-80.
\textsuperscript{32} Statutes at Large, VIII, Ch. DCLXXVIII (Feb. 26, 1773), 314-17; Boucher, Westmoreland County, I:45-51, 186-92; George Dallas Albert, History of the
Washington presented another case of pre-design. The original proprietor, David Hoge, resided near Carlisle in Cumberland County and never came west. Hoge had earlier purchased the Washington site which had been used during the Virginia period as a central meeting place. When word surfaced in 1781 that a new county would be erected, Hoge had a cabin built on the site. As he apparently had hoped, the legislature designated his cabin as a meeting place for the county court, and the fact that his brother, Jonathan, sat as a representative from Cumberland County in the state legislature may have been significant. In any case, Hoge immediately had lawyer-surveyor David Redick, his nephew-in-law by marriage to Jonathan's daughter, lay out the town. Lots sold quickly and the town was begun. The family connections of David Hoge, with his brother in the legislature and his brother's son-in-law on the scene in Washington County, undoubtedly facilitated the whole enterprise. Since Hoge did not come to the new town, he sent his sons, John and William, to whom he sold the proprietorship in 1785, and they became the resident proprietors.33

**TABLE 3**

*Summary of Lot Owners by Occupation*
*Bridgeport, Connellsville, Fredericktown, 1796*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Bridgeport</th>
<th>Connellsville</th>
<th>Fredericktown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercantile</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeoman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speculator</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*County of Westmoreland* (Philadelphia, 1882), 489; Articles of Agreement, Deed Book B, Westmoreland County, 287. See the series of statutes changing the trustees: XI, Ch. MLXXX (Mar. 22, 1784), 273-74; XII, Ch. MCLXXVI (Sept. 13, 1785), 52-53; XII, Ch. MCCLVII (Dec. 27, 1786), 344.

Waynesburg, alone, appears to have had no enterprising proprietor. Rather, when the county was established in 1796, the five trustees were instructed to choose a site within five miles of the center of the county. They chose 160 acres of the 350-acre Thomas Slater farm, bought it for $2,376, and laid out 201 lots. The only building on the site was Slater’s own cabin. Only one of the trustees was from Slater’s township, and two of the trustees lived in Washington County, not the new Greene County. Perhaps the legislature had learned from past disputes.14

Thus, in many ways, the vital function of dispensing justice on the frontier created towns *ex nihilo*. The services performed by such towns so insured their growth that shrewd men were anxious to benefit from their location. However, providing justice was not solely limited to the county towns. Towns were logical centers for government on the township level: the Union Township Justice of the Peace was the Uniontown tavern keeper Jonathan Roland; the Chartiers Township Justice of the Peace was the Cannonsburg merchant Matthew Ritchie; the East Bethlehem Township Justice of the Peace was the Fredericktown merchant Isaac Jenkinson.

In 1784, Ephraim Douglas, the new county court officer for Fayette County, cried out that “this Uniontown is the most obscure spot on the face of the globe,” 35 and there is much evidence of the crudity, the roughness and the difficulties that faced new town dwellers. Nevertheless, these little towns also provided a major source of news, information, and contact with the outside world. Not only could the Rev. Robert Ayers come to town at court time to learn the latest news, but towns also were the location of the first newspapers. The Gazette was established in Pittsburgh in 1786, and for nine years, it alone supplied the region with news. By the end of the century, however, Washington had established two papers, Uniontown had one, Greensburg had one published in both German and English, and Pittsburgh had added a second paper.36

Town dwellers were also more likely to be better read and better versed on contemporary problems. Rev. Ayers read the *British Literary Magazine* at the home of a Mr. Brooks in Uniontown; he borrowed a book after having had dinner at the home of lawyer John Young in Greensburg. When he went to get his 15th volume of the “Encyclo-

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14 Statutes at Large, XV, Ch. MDCCCLXX (Feb. 9, 1796), 380-83; Bates, Greene County, 277-78; Waychoff, Local History, no. 95.
35 Ephraim Douglas to General Irvine, quoted in Ellis, Fayette County, 283-84.
36 Ayers, Journal, Mar. 29, 1796; Crumrine, Washington County, 769; Ellis, Fayette County, 786; Buck and Buck, Western Pennsylvania, 378.
pedia," he "went to town," presumably to Brownsville or perhaps Uniontown. The location of "Jackson's Bookstore" where he stopped on his return trip from performing a marriage could not be learned, but it may have belonged to the same Jackson who established the paper mill in Brownsville. The little town of Fredericktown led all other towns in establishing a library. As early as 1793, the secretary of the Library Company called the members together in the library room to elect officers.

Towns often provided leadership in contemporary issues. One of the two Democratic Societies that sprang up in Washington County in 1793 and 1794 centered in Washington. The other one was more broadly representative of the countryside, but centered around the site of Parkinson's ferry, which soon became the town of Monongahela. Less violently political in its goals was another society organized in Washington in February 1789: "The Washington Society for the Relief of Free Negroses, and Others, Unlawfully Held in Bondage." Imbued with the wave of patriotism sweeping the country that year, the founders of the society found a parallel for seeking the freedom of all Negroses in the way that America had "asserted her rights" and "fought for her own liberty." The membership of the society was a virtual who's who of the Washington County officialdom.

Interest in higher education also centered in the towns. In 1787, the state granted charters to academies in both Pittsburgh and Washington and set aside 5,000 acres of land for the use of each school. The county courts of Washington County, in 1788, ordered that all future bench fees collected by the courts would be paid to the Washington Academy. Cannonsburg established an academy in 1791 and Bishop Asbury established a school in Uniontown in 1792. Pittsburgh had an evening school — a forerunner of adult education — as early as October 1793. Neither was common education lacking, but it was

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37 Ayers, Journal, May 13, May 21, July 4, Apr. 28, 1796. Buck and Buck, Western Pennsylvania, 306. Bookstores were discussed by Buck and Buck, but they believed the first one was not established until 1798 in Pittsburgh, ibid., 386-87.
38 Pittsburgh Gazette, Sept. 14, 1793.
39 Buck and Buck, Western Pennsylvania, 468-69; Typed copy of the society's formation taken from the Pittsburgh Gazette, Feb. 14, 1789, CA File, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.
40 Statutes at Large, XII, Ch. MCCCLXIV (Feb. 28, 1787), 357; XII, Ch. MCCCXIV (Sept. 24, 1787), 528; XII, Ch. MCCCC (Sept. 10, 1787), 489; XIV, Ch. MDCLXXIV (Apr. 8, 1793), 392; Newlin, Brackenridge, 76, 85; Docket, Court of Quarter Sessions, Washington County, Dec. 1788.
41 Buck and Buck, Western Pennsylvania, 393, 396-97; Pittsburgh Gazette, Oct. 12, 1793.
not so concentrated in the towns. Some town proprietors did try to provide for the beginnings of education, as noted above, but with dubious success. Rather it was the clergy and a number of school masters who taught the young the rudiments of education in nearly every township.  

Perhaps the only major form of early cultural life not rather exclusively located in the towns was religion. There were some churches established in the towns — a Baptist church in Uniontown, an Episcopal church in Brownsville, a Lutheran church in Greensburg. During this period, however, "religion was a predominantly rural institution, with churches mainly in the open country." The four most prominent clergymen in Washington County — Presbyterian ministers Dodd, Smith, McMillan and Henderson — all served rural congregations, and there were rural Presbyterian churches in Fayette and Westmoreland counties and rural Lutheran churches in German Township, Fayette County, and Westmoreland County, among others.

As for the fine arts — music, dancing or the theatre — little can be found in these early years. Pittsburgh had a music teacher in the 1790s, and one minor Washington official was a school teacher and a music teacher. Some dancing did take place, but much of it among the common people was probably country dancing, and the churches often took a dim view of such antics. Social dancing among the leading families of Pittsburgh was just making its appearance during the last decade of the century, although Brackenridge did rhapsodize about "halls lighted up with splendor, ladies and gentlemen assembled, various music, and the mazes of the dance," as early as 1786. Both Washington and Pittsburgh had traveling theatre troops during 1790, but there was very little beyond this until the nineteenth century. Support of these fine arts demanded wealth and the emergence of a social leisure class. Such prerequisites did not exist in the small towns of western Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century, and they did not even exist in quantity in the major towns of the western frontier until

42 James Veech, Monongahela of Old (Pittsburgh, 1858, 1892), 104-5. At least fourteen school masters taught in Fayette County in 1796 according to assessment records.
43 Buck and Buck, Western Pennsylvania, 413.
44 Boucher, Westmoreland County, I:304; Ellis, Fayette County, 444; Buck and Buck, Western Pennsylvania, have a full chapter on religious life, 401-29, which details the beginnings of each denomination. Their discussion of intellectual life in general, Ibid., 372-400, is also much broader than the brief discussion presented here. Most of it, however, concerns the period after 1796 through 1815, when cultural developments were greater.
the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. Western Pennsylvania towns had a class structure in the eighteenth century, but they did not contain the wealthy leisure class necessary to support the fine arts.\textsuperscript{45}

**TABLE 4**

*Class Structure of Three Frontier Towns On the Basis of Total Taxable Wealth By Occupational Categories*

_Bridgeport, Connellsville, Fredericktown, 1796_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Categories</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>In Top 10%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bridgeport</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>$440-7614</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercantile</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>60-5104</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeoman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1025</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>41-703</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>60-570</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speculator</td>
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<td>12.5</td>
<td>70-100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connellsville</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
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<td>7.1</td>
<td>$245-2034</td>
<td>1058</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercantile</td>
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<td>375</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yeoman</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>335-778</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>10-505</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
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<td>23.2</td>
<td>10-360</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speculator</td>
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<td>25.0</td>
<td>20-1250</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fredericktown</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>£194-480</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mercantile</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>124-1060</td>
<td>148</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yeoman</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artisan</td>
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<td>2-228</td>
<td>53</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>7-60</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Class Structure of Western Pennsylvania Towns

The new towns that grew up on the western Pennsylvania frontier began to demonstrate very early a measure of social inequality. In these early days, the limits between classes were not precise. Many of the new businessmen, for example, played a dual merchant-artisan role. Others added a political dimension to their normal economic pursuits. Poorer artisans shaded-off into general laborers. Furthermore, with a tax system largely oriented to land and agrarian forms of wealth, the precise economic status of a given town resident could be obscured. Merchant inventories were not necessarily reflected in the value of the building and lot which housed them. Nevertheless, a meaningful general description of these early towns was possible, and it revealed that they generally followed the patterns of their larger, more sophisticated urban brethren. 46

The class structure of four towns in particular — the three smaller towns of Bridgeport, Connellsville, and Fredericktown for 1796, and the county seat town of Washington for 1793 — has been delineated for this study. 47 The most obvious feature of these towns was the dominant position of the professional and mercantile classes. These two groups consistently had the greatest taxable wealth and normally included members of the richest decile of taxable persons in each township. The town proprietor was, in every case, one of those within the top 10 percent, and Benjamin Wells, the hated revenue collector of the Whiskey Rebellion and Connellsville merchant, was the fourth person in the professional category to rank among the top decile in the small towns. Normally, a leading merchant or two also ranked among the top decile in taxable wealth. In Bridgeport, it was the brother of the proprietor, who was a miller. In Connellsville, it was a merchant and a forge owner, and in Fredericktown, it was a merchant.

46 See the class descriptions in Wade, Urban Frontier, 106 ff; Jackson Turner Main, The Social Structure of Revolutionary America (Princeton, N.J., 1965), 34-41.

47 It should be noted that the 1793 assessment did not list specific occupations. Those occupations used here have been read back into the 1793 assessment from the court records and from Crumrine, Washington County, 489-92. The artisan figures, in particular, are too small. Not all of the artisan trades listed in the American Museum or Universal Magazine of 1792 could be identified. Furthermore, some artisans are known, but are not on the magazine list. One result is that at least 13 of those without specific trades who are listed as dependents in the table were probably those unidentified artisans. With occupations coming from such diverse sources and for years ranging from 1792 to 1798, the Washington County figures must be read as suggestive rather than as precise.
The few yeoman farmers who owned town lots for whatever reason also tended to be above average in total wealth, but it was their farm acreage, not their town lots, which normally provided the taxable wealth. The exception was John Rice Connel, the proprietor's son, who had three highly valuable lots in addition to his 100 acres.

The laboring classes formed the bottom half of the class structure of these towns. On the whole, artisans tended to be better-off than dependents, the exception in Bridgeport notwithstanding. A few artisans had above average wealth. Blacksmiths, millwrights, and certain members of the building trades tended to lead the list, but the numbers in each trade were so small as to make generalization hazardous. The wealth of dependents did not range as high as that of artisans. These people lacked any particular occupational skill. An occasional one may have been the gentlemanly type or an undetected speculator, or a widow. Considering their generally low economic status, however, the great majority of them probably comprised the common laboring class of the towns.

The town of Washington, although it was almost as large as the other three combined, did not have a significantly different class structure. In fact, the particular nature of Washington as a county seat intensified the dominance of the professional and mercantile classes. Six of the 11 persons in the top decile of this self-contained township were in the professional class and the other five were in the mercantile class. At the very top was town proprietor John Hoge whose taxable wealth topped £1200. He was followed at some distance by lawyer David Bradford, a leader of the Whiskey Rebels (£319); County Treasurer Andrew Swearingen (£221.10); lawyer James Ross (£156.10); President Judge Alexander Addison (£132) and lawyer Thomas Scott (£129.10). The county's Register of Wills and Recorder of Deeds James Marshel (£129) just missed inclusion in this group by 10/.

Among the mercantile category, there were also several persons of wealth. Tavern keeper John Dodd led the mercantile group largely because he was the only town resident with a large landholding — 204 acres. Another tavern keeper, Hugh Wilson, followed with £181.10 and merchants Blackeney, Cunningham and Clark completed the top decile with taxable wealth ranging from £142 to £158.5. Merchant David Acheson, and tavern keeper John Purviance, were the only other persons with taxable wealth above £100, and from these leaders, the wealth of the mercantile group fell off to certain small retailers and several tavern keepers with modest wealth. Six
ranged from £51 to £92 and seven more ranged from £8 to £41 in taxable wealth.

Among the artisans, a tailor had the greatest wealth, followed by a shoemaker and an artisan of unknown trade, all with more than £100 of taxable property. From these three, artisan wealth fell off to a cabinet maker with £66 of taxable wealth, and three artisans with wealth of £46, £51, and £53. The dependent classes were headed by a widow with property worth £121.10. Five other dependents had property valued at £40 to £80. None of the rest had more than £30 of property, but four artisans did have property between £30 and £40. Twelve dependents were single freemen with no property, and 12 others were taxed for the value of a horse (£8) or less. Those few absentees who owned lots had only small holdings. One owned as many as four lots, another had two, but the rest had only one lot each. Thus in this new county seat town, which in 1793 was only 12 years old, a definite class structure based upon occupational groupings had emerged. The governmental leaders of the county and several leading merchants clearly headed the class structure. They were followed by the skilled artisans and then the dependent classes. The few speculators probably had little real economic influence on the life of the town.

Towns provided a greatly disproportionate number of political leaders in comparison to the rest of the county. In a study of 36 principal political leaders, who collectively held more than 110 major offices and numerous minor posts—26 men from Washington County and 10 from Fayette County — 36 percent came from towns, especially the county seats. By contrast, town dwellers comprised only 6 percent of the total county population; towns contributed six times their proportional share of political leaders. To be sure, several county officers moved to the county seat after being elected, and maintained land elsewhere. For example, James Marshel, Sheriff, then Register of Wills and Recorder of Deeds for Washington County, continued to hold 1,400 acres in Cross Creek township. Others, however, located in the town first, then developed political careers. Two lawyers, two merchants, a doctor, a tavern keeper and the town proprietor — all from Washington — developed political careers after they settled in the county seat. Towns, particularly the county seat, provided would-be political leaders with the opportunity to become known by a broad range of people and to make the contacts necessary to political success.

The influence of towns upon the surrounding countryside was not

yet great. In these early stages, the influence seldom reached beyond the borders of the township within which the town was located. Numbers of merchants, artisans, common workers, even local politicians lived in all townships, and the overall proportions of these occupational groups in townships with new towns was not significantly different from those townships without towns. Where towns existed, there did tend to be a few more professional people. Yeomen farmers tended to be more concentrated in townships without town development. In a township like Franklin in Fayette County, where a large number of artisans lived, the presence of Isaac Meason’s iron plantation was the cause, not the tiny town of New Haven.

**TABLE 5**

*Class Structure of a County Seat Town On the Basis of Total Taxable Wealth By Occupational Categories, Washington, 1793*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation Categories</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Taxable Wealth</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>In Top 10%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>£8-1216.10</td>
<td>£123</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercantile</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>8- 296.10</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisan</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>0- 120.10</td>
<td>26.10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>0- 121.10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speculator</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5- 60</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The more direct influence of towns occurred within the individual townships, where towns seemed to draw a disproportionate share of non-farmers. In the large mountainous township of Bullskin, for example, one-half of the professional, mercantile, and artisan classes owned lots in Connellsville. In the Monongahela River township of Luzerne, 20 to 25 percent of mercantile and artisan classes owned lots in Bridgeport. Six of seven cordwainers in Bullskin and Luzerne townships owned town lots. The only property owned by carpenters, tailors, tanners, bricklayers and boat builders in these two townships were town lots. How many artisans lacking property also lived in these towns cannot be said. In Fredericktown, however, where six mercantile people and 14 artisans owned lots, an additional seven artisans without property and two mercantile clerks in the same cir-
cumstances also lived in the town and resided with the property owners. Similar situations undoubtedly existed in the other towns.

Towns had particularly great influence upon professional people. Scarcely any lawyer lived anywhere but in the county towns. Although townships without towns had physicians, the only physician in Bullskin and Luzerne townships lived in the towns. Tavern keepers and innkeepers concentrated in the towns. For example, 10 of 27 tavern keepers licensed by the Washington County Court in 1792 were from the town of Washington, and all together the town of Washington apparently had 14 tavern keepers in 1793. In 1795, Westmoreland County limited the number of taverns in the county to 34, but eight taverns were designated for Greensburg, itself.49

Thus, within the given townships, towns were exerting influence even in these early days. They definitely attracted the professional and mercantile and artisan populations within the townships. More broadly, towns acted as trading centers; they contained most of the cultural life; they performed the many services of local government. A significant proportion of the major political leaders came from these early towns. Clearly, in function and to some extent in class structure, these early towns were already different from the surrounding countryside. Town dwellers were making an impact upon western Pennsylvania society of the 1790s far in excess of their small numbers.

49 Docket, Court of Quarter Sessions, Washington County, 1793; Minute Book B, Court of Quarter Sessions, Westmoreland County, Mar. 1795.