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Booster Ethos: Community, Image, and Profit in Early Clarksburg

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Much like their counterparts in developing western cities, Harrison County businessmen acted as boosters for the county seat of Clarksburg. They strove to bring improvements that would increase population, land values, and opportunities for trade. Clarksburg was not an upstart, or fast-growing city, as defined by historian Daniel Boorstin in his classic study of American development; it never experienced the rapid population growth necessary to be considered a rival to other western settlements.¹ In fact, with a population of only 895 in 1860, it was not really a city but a fledgling town.² Located in the north-central region of West Virginia and settled in the late eighteenth century, Harrison County was an area of subsistence agriculture, where 90 percent of the population resided and worked on farms. A grist- and sawmill economy developed with the early settlement of the county and provided services for agricultural producers, and local entrepreneurs, through the mid-nineteenth century. By 1840 the number of farms and amount of grain produced led Harrison County residents to boast of having the most mills of any county in western Virginia.³ Coarse-ground meal from local mills provided the link between the county's production of corn and its chief export commodity-cattle. Prominent farmers and businessmen, individuals deeply committed to commercialism, owned many of the mills. Some expanded their holdings to include small-scale manufacturing and retail establishments, others gained skills as lawyers and surveyors which allowed them to profit from participation in local land speculation.

Building on the agricultural economy, this group of prominent farmers, mill owners, and local businessmen emerged to bring the county into contact with markets in eastern cities. These local elites differed from the small family farmer in a number of ways. Most were lawyers, surveyors, merchants who sold to the local market, and landowners who typically held more than three hundred acres. Clarksburg elites were proto-capitalists; they had the desire and ambition to participate in manufacturing and in an inter-regional market economy on a large scale but lacked the individual financial resources to do so. The intersection of land ownership, residence in the county seat, kinship ties, and the ability to profit from limited capital investment characterized those with elite status.⁴ Wealthy landowners, lawyers, and local exchange merchants had a desire to reach larger markets for their goods and services and became active in a campaign to link Harrison County to commercial centers in the East, such as Baltimore. The elites of Clarksburg embraced a booster ethos that paralleled the actions of their counterparts farther west, and it is in that context that they will be examined here.

The booster ethos American communities embraced in the nineteenth century spoke to the desire for both economic growth and social order.⁵ It offered a bond for the members of a growing community and allowed for unity and collective action in the city-building enterprise. Historian David Hamer notes that boosting deserves to be considered as a serious method employed for economic development in growing communities. According to Hamer, boosters projected a broad vision of what cities and towns should be like and collectively offered a "celebration of the potential of urban development in new societies." Historian Don Doyle identifies boosting as a means of cementing communities together and as a "powerful adhesive in the making of the business class."⁶

Frequently characterized by an extravagant optimism, boosters in western cities, such as Chicago and Cincinnati, expressed the belief that their towns were destined for greatness. As young towns and cities emerged in the early to mid-nineteenth century, the phenomena of boosterism and urban rivalry began in earnest. The popular image of boosters as men who employed creative means, such as highly exaggerated newspaper articles and

advertisements, to lure potential settlers to their new "city" cannot be denied. In his study of the growth of Chicago, environmental historian William Cronon notes that boosters believed "climate, soils, vegetation, transportation routes, and other features of the landscape all pointed toward key locations that nature had designated for urban greatness." As was common in the nineteenth century, the boosters of that town went so far as to suggest the location of the new metropolis was assured by nature, even possibly ordained by God.⁷

Yet boosterism involved much more than the distribution of pamphlets, circulars, and newspapers. It was a phenomenon that took on a unique role in frontier development and American westward expansion. Boosterism combined personal gain and public good, the "interfusing of public and private prosperity." The successful booster was a businessman who sought to increase his personal wealth but was also committed to community improvement. The booster had absolute faith in his community and wanted to create a town that would "attract" people. In the booster's mind the prospect for personal profit was tied to the growth of his town and to any activity that would "make it easier, cheaper, and pleasanter" for people to join his community.⁸

To reconcile reality with the image projected, boosters sought the attractions necessary to make their town viable in the eyes of the settlers they hoped to attract; booster businessmen aspired to build the towns they promoted. In addition to building their businesses, boosters sought to emulate the conveniences of long-established eastern cities and were concerned with the cultural image their town projected. Most were serious and sincere in the belief that their town had potential for greatness.⁹ They were community makers and community leaders, businessmen with a vested interest in the growth of their town or city. Daniel Boorstin argued that "not to boost your city showed a lack of community spirit and a lack of business sense."¹⁰

The businessmen of Clarksburg shared many of the same concerns that worried other western settlers. They wanted to profit personally, but many were also concerned with building the cultural image of their town. Evidence of their booster spirit can be found early in the nineteenth century.

The goals of Clarksburg elites were to attract people by building a respectable town and to increase profits for their businesses. The acts of various Clarksburg businessmen demonstrate that these individuals were involved in boosting the town and in building the population and business interests of the area. John George Jackson, who operated a mill complex, worked almost single-handedly to improve river navigation in the 1820s so goods produced at his complex could reach wider markets through Pittsburgh to the north and Parkersburg to the west. Although he would be involved in some community-building activities, Jackson's enthusiasm for the Monongalia Navigation Company is best attributed to a personal desire to increase profits for his business ventures than a desire for community improvement. In fact, in the face of complaints from local property owners, a Virginia Board of Public Works investigation led to a reduction in the project's capitalization once it was discovered that Jackson, not Clarksburg, would be the primary beneficiary of navigation improvements.¹¹ Another local elite, Benjamin Wilson, Jr., became the president of the unchartered Virginia Saline Bank, which he and other elites hoped would provide the necessary financing for building their town and their business interests. Wilson, the primary local rival of Jackson, spent most of his energy opposing any improvement project his challenger suggested. The two bitterly contested who would donate the lot on which a new county courthouse would be built.¹² Some, such as Jackson and Wilson, acted primarily for their own interests, but others embraced the booster ethos and strove for community improvement as well as personal profit.

Phineas Chapin, who tried his hand at a variety of business ventures throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, was an active spokesman for Clarksburg.¹³ His correspondence suggests he believed nature provided Clarksburg with advantages that made it especially well suited for settlement. In 1817 he encouraged his brother to move to the new town:

I believe it is to be the most healthy part of the United States. We are so elevated, so free from nearby swamps and stagnant waters, that we get nothing but pure and wholesome air-and we generally have good, pleasant weather-the Spring is early, the soil is abundantly rich. We have not such society here to be sure as may be found in New York City, Boston etc.-we cannot expect that you know-the country is new-the materials are rough, but we are rapidly progressing in the arts and science and especially in refinement.¹⁴

In many ways, Chapin is representative of the Clarksburg elites and the city booster. His actions clearly exemplify the community builder who mingled the goals of personal and public prosperity. Little is known of his origins, save that he came to Clarksburg from Massachusetts in 1817 as an agent for the New England Land Company which operated out of Randolph County.¹⁵ The new businessman of the West was a community maker and community leader whose "primary commodity was land and his secondary commodity was transportation."¹⁶ Chapin was a natural city booster whose involvement in Clarksburg affairs began soon after his arrival. His agency for the land company allowed him to gain a reasonable amount of property and, by 1819, he married the daughter of John Sommerville, a prominent businessman and tavern owner. In 1823 he began publishing the weekly Clarksburg Intelligencer, which he operated until 1826.¹⁷ In addition to his business-building endeavors, he engaged in activities to enhance the cultural image of Clarksburg.

Chapin and his family were members of the Presbyterian congregation of Clarksburg. When the group experienced difficulty in obtaining an ordained minister, Chapin waged an active campaign to solve the problem. The only Presbyterian minister within one hundred miles, Asa Brooks, came only occasionally. The Presbyterians also faced problems in attempting to raise funds for a meeting house so, throughout the 1820s, they shared the Methodist meeting house, holding services on those occasional Sunday afternoons Asa Brooks was in town. Solving the problem would allow Chapin the satisfaction of providing the community with a more permanent minister and would be of personal interest to him as a member of the Presbyterian congregation. In early 1830 Chapin wrote to Massachusetts, appealing for a "minister of the gospel to come out and settle among us."¹⁸ He succeeded in getting four members of the local congregation to pledge a total of four hundred dollars as salary for a minister who would agree to come to Clarksburg to preach and establish a school. In late January 1830, however, Chapin's request was denied as no minister was willing to travel to the backwoods of western Virginia, especially not to perform the dual function of minister and teacher.¹⁹

By December 1830 a compromise was reached on the question of a minister, and arrangements were made for Brooks to spend three-quarters of his time in Harrison County. Chapin addressed the Quarterly Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church at Clarksburg, proposing the Presbyterians be granted use of the meeting house at "11:00 a.m. one half of the Sabbaths he [Brooks] shall spend in town during the year and the other half of the Sabbaths he shall occupy the house in the evenings or afternoons."²⁰ Because it would interrupt regular services for the Methodists, the request was denied and the Presbyterians were compelled to hold a subscription drive to build a permanent sanctuary for their services. The church was built in the mid-1830s; unfortunately, Brooks died in 1834, before its completion. It was another three years before the Clarksburg Presbyterians would have a permanent minister.²¹

In addition to his faith in the Presbyterian church, Chapin kept his faith in the belief that Clarksburg was destined to be a great city. Evidence of his conviction is offered through his repeated willingness to risk debt by entering a variety of business endeavors. As well as the newspaper business, Chapin operated a stagecoach line when the Northwestern Turnpike was built in 1836 and established at least two retail partnerships in the 1830s. Apparently Chapin had little business sense for he was in debt frequently. Records indicate he failed in all his business undertakings, with the exception of his land holdings.²²

Nevertheless, Chapin was an active community builder for Clarksburg and Harrison County and later served as a delegate to an education convention held at Clarksburg in 1841, where he showed his community support by advocating the benefits of free public schools.²³ He was the first county clerk elected in 1851, after constitutional revisions of that year provided for popular election of county officials. Chapin also served on a variety of community projects and boards, including those planning social events and balls which were held in the county courthouse.²⁴

In addition to touting natural advantages and building community business interests, community boosting required a town to cultivate an image that projected prosperity and success. Clarksburg businessmen, such as Chapin, wanted their town to appear culturally equal or superior to long-established towns in the East. The desire of boosters to establish their town as a cultural center is another recurring theme of western boosterism. In addition to churches, these aspirations were manifested through the building of a variety of libraries, opera houses, and educational institutions in many western communities. The builders of western towns and cities were concerned with the image their community projected to visitors and potential settlers. The stereotype of the "frontier town" as rough and underdeveloped was to be avoided.²⁵

Schools were an integral component of the image Harrison County residents wanted to project. The earliest settlers established "old field schools," which were associated with churches or held in abandoned log cabins. Students used primitive writing materials and pens made from goose quills. Teachers were paid by subscription, with tuition being \$2.50 per student. Since most farmers had little cash income, payment was often in the form of goods such as linsey, linen, or grain. Children from farm families attended school sporadically, when their labor could be spared.²⁶

The county's early teachers were often ministers who performed the dual task of tending to a congregation and teaching its youth. Most were considered respected professionals and often served on boards and influenced community affairs. Ezekiel Quillen, the first permanent Presbyterian minister, operated a local school and was involved in a variety of community projects. In an 1845 letter, Quillen related that his school had "about 70 scholars in all, four boarders and three teachers."²⁷

The old field schools served the children of small family farmers and rural residents, but no self-respecting town could be complete without an institution of higher learning. In Harrison County, a movement to gain such a reputation began before 1800 with the establishment of the Randolph Academy, a subscription school for children of the elites. Touted as the "William and Mary College of the west," Harrison County's leading citizens served on

the Randolph Academy Board of Trustees. Later only elites living within three miles of the academy were selected for that service.²⁸ Unlike many secondary schools in western cities of the nineteenth century which were funded privately or had a religious affiliation, the Randolph Academy was originally designated to receive state support. Although subsequent problems would forestall state funding, the school was to be supported, in the manner of William and Mary College, by surveying fees from surrounding counties and through enrollee subscriptions.²⁹ To prove that the school could provide quality education, the trustees engaged George Towers, a graduate of Oxford University in England, as instructor.³⁰

Local boosters of the school circulated an advertisement promoting its benefits when the first term was scheduled to begin in 1795:

The Trustees of the Randolph Academy notify the public that they have erected in the town in Clarksburg, Harrison County, Virginia, a commodious building, in order to carry into effect the laudable design of the Institution, and accordingly have employed as a tutor in the said Academy the Rev'd George Towers, lately from England, a gentleman of undoubted character and abilities, who was engaged to teach the Latin and Greek Languages, the English grammatically, Arithmetic and Geography. The price of tuition will be, for the Latin and Greek, sixteen dollars, for Geography, six dollars, for Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, five dollars per annum, to be paid quarterly. Genteel boarding can be had in the town or neighborhood on reasonable terms.³¹

Academy trustees were rather optimistic in their description of the school, failing to note in the circular that the "commodious building" was actually a log structure. The surveying fees designated for the school went unreceived year after year, and the facility was likely to fail unless abundant subscriptions were received.³²

Yet for the elites of Clarksburg, the Randolph Academy was a visible testament to the status of their town as one that was culturally equal to those in the East. Academy trustees worked diligently to secure funding for the institution, and the minute books record repeated attempts to convince the surveyors to contribute the funds the state had allocated.³³ The academy continued operations even though its books showed an uninterrupted deficit. In the 1820s a committee including Benjamin Wilson, Jr. and John George Jackson was formed to prepare a petition to the legislature for an endowment for the institution. When that failed, the trustees tried direct appeals to the governor and a motion to raise funds by way of a lottery. The struggle for funding finally ended when the school was sold in June 1841.³⁴ The effort to keep the school operating demonstrated that the elites of Clarksburg believed the academy to be an important embodiment of the community's status as a cultural center in the region.

The construction of public buildings was another image-boosting enterprise the elites of Clarksburg practiced. The first courthouse, constructed in 1787, was little more than a log cabin.³⁵ When a new structure was considered in the 1810s, its location and appearance were uppermost in the minds of Clarksburg businessmen, who went so far as to petition the Virginia legislature for an injunction when a faction of elites wanted the new courthouse built outside the main part of town. John George Jackson was so concerned with the location and appearance of the new building that he offered the county court a choice of land he owned in the town, as well as a donation of five hundred dollars to ensure the building was constructed of brick or stone.³⁶ When completed on the site Jackson preferred, the new courthouse projected the image local boosters desired; it was an impressive two-story brick building, thirty to thirty-five feet wide, with a graceful cupola on the front.³⁷

If visitors had a negative experience in a new town, their writings or discussions could tarnish the developing town's reputation. A visitor wrote to the Clarksburg newspaper editor in 1819 of a horrid experience while attending a funeral in the town:

I wonder why the citizens of Clarksburg who are esteemed as a liberal and intelligent people have not a place to bury their dead, secured by a fence from the intrusion of hogs and cattle. I attended a funeral not long ago and to my utter astonishment when the time arrived for the departure of the corps [sic] to its place of destination there was no Bier on which the coffin could be placed-the consequence was that a wagon was substituted. When this necessary convenience might be procured for a trifling sum of money I think the citizens of the town are highly culpable for not having one made.³⁸

Elites responded to this criticism within two months. The county court passed an ordinance prohibiting hogs from running at large and ordered the enclosure of existing cemetery plots.³⁹

Businessmen not only had to be concerned with building their town but, as fires were frequent in new areas, they often had to deal with rebuilding the town and its image. When disaster struck, the ability of a town to recover rapidly and continue its advancement was a sign of its natural resilience. In cities like Chicago, which was nearly destroyed by the Great Fire in 1871, boosters used the opportunity to portray the city as "great in its ruins," to be compared with ancient Carthage in its recovery from disaster.⁴⁰ When fire destroyed most of downtown Clarksburg in May 1851, elites responded in a like-minded fashion. Newspaper editorials in rival towns, such as Morgantown and Wheeling, predicted that Clarksburg would never recover. But the elites of the town set about rapid

reconstruction of the business district.⁴¹ Less than a year later, William Cooper, the newspaper editor, publicized their efforts:

If any one [sic] doubts the enterprise of the citizens of Clarksburg, he will be convinced of his error, at once, by a visit to our town at the present time. On the site of the fire last spring, he would find two fine brick fire-proof buildings, filled with occupants, all driving a thriving business. There are, also, several other buildings in contemplation, the foundation of some of which is already laid. The scene of the late fire is now that of workmen busily employed. Within the coming year Clarksburg will present an appearance much improved over that of the past. Without a single exception, those who were burnt out have resumed business.⁴²

Clarksburg elites refused to allow a fire to destroy the image of their town, but its status faced a more serious threat from the advances of technology and the coming of the railroad in the 1850s. Transportation improvements, particularly railroads, threatened to change the relationship of Clarksburg to the surrounding countryside. Until the 1850s Clarksburg was the undisputed trade center in Harrison County. This status can be understood by envisioning a central place theory, similar to that used by today's geographers, to understand the complicated relationship between towns and their hinterlands. In his study of Chicago, William Cronon describes the city as the center of a set of concentric circles, with bands of activity that widen as the physical areas they represent move farther from the city. The point of the exercise is to map the trade areas that are linked to the city, which becomes the central trading station for the region.⁴³ Western towns were often concerned with being the center of action and trade. In western Virginia, the county seat was the center of economic, as well as social and political, activity.⁴⁴ County seats served as marketplaces for their farming regions, and as population grew in rural areas, so did the mercantile and manufacturing activities in the town.⁴⁵

The earliest settlers of Harrison County established Clarksburg as the county seat, but the task of maintaining the central trading place status of the town fell to the elites. Ensuring that their town would continue to grow and prosper was a goal that united the businessmen. Historian Don Doyle notes that "at a time when most businesses still took the form of small family firms and partnerships, the city-building enterprise brought businessmen together in a large-scale enterprise."⁴⁶ The internal improvements such as river navigation, better roads, and a railroad link were city-building enterprises. Elites united behind a project to improve navigation on the West Fork and Monongahela rivers in the 1820s, with at least six Clarksburg businessmen serving on the company's board.⁴⁷ When that failed, they turned toward road construction. Their actions helped steer the route of the Northwestern Turnpike through the center of Clarksburg in 1836 and gave the town the advantage of being a central stopping place between Winchester and Parkersburg, the respective terminal points of the road.⁴⁸ This made Clarksburg a trading station for the region as well as the county.

In the late 1820s the Baltimore and Ohio (B&O) Railroad began to consider a western route to connect its namesake city with the Ohio River, which naturally led businessmen in the towns and cities of transmontane Virginia to begin actively promoting the advantages of their communities. The elites of Clarksburg were no exception and joined boosters in Winchester, Parkersburg, and Wheeling in their quest for the rail line. At the company's offices in Baltimore, "letters poured in promoting the advantages of their locality for a railroad route."⁴⁹ The Virginia General Assembly passed the act to incorporate the B&O line through Virginia on March 8, 1827, and designated that the road could not strike the Ohio River south of Parkersburg.⁵⁰

Construction of the railroad from the east was slow and did not reach western Virginia until the early 1840s, after the Northwestern Turnpike made Clarksburg a central trading stop. Businessmen in both Clarksburg and Parkersburg felt certain the B&O would follow the same route. The success of railroads elsewhere confirmed the improvement could bring many changes to a fledgling town.⁵¹ Because of the railroad's ability to increase property values and ensure growth, the elites of Clarksburg actively pursued the B&O and firmly believed that the best route was through the town.⁵²

The Clarksburg-Parkersburg route received wide support throughout the region and in Baltimore. Indeed, B&O engineer Benjamin Latrobe surveyed several routes for a western terminus between Wheeling and Parkersburg and found that the Parkersburg terminus by way of Clarksburg would be the most advantageous and direct route.⁵³ Louis McLane, president of the railroad, also preferred the Parkersburg route; unfortunately, plans were halted when a rivalry emerged between Parkersburg and Wheeling, where legislators and a faction of B&O officials favored a more northerly terminus. A common cause of urban rivalry in growing towns, the dispute over the railroad caused bitter feelings between interests that allied with one side or the other.⁵⁴ Refusing to back down, the Clarksburg elites organized a local convention to promote the Parkersburg terminus in the fall of 1845. Attended by delegates from eleven north-central counties, the action had the support of the B&O, which sent Latrobe as the company's representative.⁵⁵

The influence of the Wheeling legislators proved too forceful for the north-central boosters, who lost their chance for the rail line when the General Assembly passed the B&O law of 1845. Extending the contract of the railroad to

allow additional time for construction, the act prohibited the B&O from crossing the Ohio River south of Wheeling. Clarksburg elites and their counterparts in Parkersburg lost the bid for the railroad, and the new line passed through the town of Grafton in Taylor County, fifteen miles east of Clarksburg.⁵⁶ But area elites were not willing to accept defeat and, before the B&O was completed, they sought a second chance to save the central place status of Clarksburg.

Before the coming of the railroad, trade goods passed through Clarksburg from points east and west, but the B&O terminal at Grafton jeopardized the town's status. The elites understood that commerce in their town was directly related to trade with surrounding rural areas and a town pushed off the route commonly used by travelers, such as happened when the B&O circumvented Clarksburg, could pass into oblivion within a few years.⁵⁷ They again allied with promoters in Parkersburg and petitioned for a connecting rail line that would keep the town on the main trade route.⁵⁸ The idea was sound-across the Ohio River from Parkersburg was to be the terminus of the Marietta and Cincinnati Railroad, already under construction. This proposed railroad spur would therefore link the B&O at Grafton to the Marietta and Cincinnati in Ohio.⁵⁹

When the legislature answered the petition by granting a charter for the Northwestern Virginia Railroad in 1851, a subscription campaign was mounted throughout the region. Under the supervision of Virginia governor and Harrison County resident Joseph Johnson, Clarksburg lawyers Gideon Camden, Cyrus Vance, Burton Despard, and Jonathan M. Bennett were authorized to receive subscriptions for up to six hundred shares of stock in the company at fifty dollars per share.⁶⁰ Parkersburg residents subscribed heavily to the project, but the rural residents of Harrison County seemed indifferent. Local elites, including William Cooper, editor of the weekly Cooper's Clarksburg Register, urged farmers to support the railroad. Editorials in his paper touted the venture as a great benefit to the average resident. He also advised farmers to deal fairly with the company with regard to selling land along the railroad's route.⁶¹ These efforts failed to open the pocketbooks of rural Harrison County residents, and they did not subscribe to railroad stock in the numbers needed to guarantee construction. Residents were even offered the option of purchasing shares in the company on an installment plan, requiring an initial investment of only three dollars.⁶²

Cooper seemed baffled that county residents failed to support the construction of the railroad, but they may not have been in a position to purchase the stock. With increased agricultural production after the opening of the Northwestern Turnpike, rural residents were clearly enjoying participation in market commerce but not necessarily on a cash basis. Merchants in the county accepted farm produce and home manufactures in exchange for eastern store goods throughout the 1850s. Although other county merchants may have continued to operate on a barter system, Clarksburg merchants appear to have switched to a "cash only" form of trade by the 1860s, after the construction of the railroad.⁶³

Stock subscriptions also failed to sell in the town of Clarksburg. Two months after sales began, the only shares sold were to Burton Despard, the commissioner who had opened the subscription books.⁶⁴ Instead of a dearth of cash flow, which was not apparent in the town, the problem of the railroad's location may have led elites to adopt a "wait and see" attitude. At least three routes were considered as locations for the Northwestern Virginia Railroad. One would pass through the town of Weston in Lewis County; another would cross Simpson Creek near Bridgeport, four miles outside of Clarksburg; and a third would pass through Clarksburg. Only the latter route was acceptable to the elites of Clarksburg.⁶⁵

This concern for the location of the railroad was evident in the correspondence of local elites. Caleb Boggess, a Clarksburg lawyer, indicated to Weston House of Delegates member Jonathan M. Bennett in July 1851, "I saw some time past three of the subordinate examiners of the B&O R. Company and they all seem of the opinion the N. W. R. Road would go through Weston." In early 1852 Boggess was concerned that the Simpson Creek route would prevail.⁶⁶ By the time the Clarksburg route was finally designated in late 1852 and construction scheduled to begin, the venture was severely underfunded.⁶⁷

For a time it seemed the Northwestern Virginia Railroad could not be constructed as a private venture and, given eastern Virginia's continued indifference to the financing of western internal improvements, it was unlikely the railroad could expect much in the way of state monies. Local elites along the route were determined to secure the necessary financing to build the railroad. Because Baltimore was a main trading partner of the region and the B&O would benefit from an east-to-west connection with the Ohio River terminus of the Marietta and Cincinnati Railroad, elites turned their attention toward gaining the backing of Baltimore residents and the B&O.

Local elites waged an ardent campaign to gain the support of Thomas Swann, who was appointed president of the B&O in 1848, and the financial backing of Baltimore merchants.⁶⁸ Jonathan M. Bennett was a key figure in winning over the initially reluctant Swann.⁶⁹ Although the Northwestern Virginia Railroad was not originally part of the B&O, Swann eventually boosted the project.⁷⁰ He could not offer the financial backing of the B&O, but Swann linked local elites with Baltimore agents who were willing to promote a subscription drive in that area. He even

offered to come to Clarksburg to help organize the company.⁷¹

The agent Swann recommended, Henry S. Garrett, proved an able man for the task of obtaining Baltimore subscriptions. He managed to overcome "not a few obstacles to Embarrass and defer the obtaining of so much money here, to be Expended in another Commonweath [sic] and in some measure beyond the management, or control of those who contribute it."⁷² Indeed, subscriptions were received in such amounts that the city of Baltimore floated a bond of \$1.5 million for the project, and the B&O backed a bond in the same amount. The cost for construction of the railroad was estimated at \$3.5 million, and the charter issued by Virginia required its completion within two years. When the road was completed in May 1857, it passed into the management of the B&O.⁷³

Once the Clarksburg route for the Northwestern Virginia Railroad was guaranteed, the town's elites rallied behind the line's construction. They busied themselves selling their land holdings along the line to the new company. The elites were finally assured that Clarksburg would maintain its central trading place status in the region.⁷⁴

Whether the elites of Clarksburg were building a school, establishing a church, or working to secure their town's status, the actions born of their booster spirit helped to change the lives of many Harrison County residents. Their desire for internal improvements shaped the landscape of the area and established Clarksburg as a central trading center for the region. Even withholding their support for the Northwestern Virginia Railroad until Clarksburg was assured of a rail terminal demonstrated their commitment to the growth of the community. The booster of the town, like his counterpart in the Midwest, was, in the words of Daniel Boorstin, the "organizer, the persuader, the discoverer of opportunities, the projector, the risk-taker, and the man able to attach himself quickly and profitably to some group until its promise was tested."⁷⁵

Notes

1. Daniel Boorstin, *The Americans: The National Experience* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), 113-14.
2. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of the United States in 1860, Eighth Census* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1866), 518.
3. Bureau of the Census, *Statistics of the United States of America, Sixth Census* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1842), 236-37.
4. Mary Beth Pudup, "The Boundaries of Class in Preindustrial Appalachia," *Journal of Historical Geography* 15(1989): 141-46; and John A. Williams, "Class, Section, and Culture in Nineteenth-Century West Virginia Politics," in *Appalachia in the Making: The Mountain South in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Mary Beth Pudup, Dwight B. Billings, and Altina Waller (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1995), 218.
5. Sally F. Griffith, "'Order, Discipline, and a few Cannon': Benjamin Franklin, the Association, and the Rhetoric and Practice of Boosterism," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 116(1992): 132.
6. David Hamer, *New Towns in the New World: Images and Perceptions of the Nineteenth Century Urban Frontier* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1990), 59-61; and Don H. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860-1910* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1990), 136-37. 7. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1991), 35.
8. Boorstin, *The Americans*, 115-19.
9. Hamer, *New Towns*, 57.
10. Boorstin, *The Americans*, 117.
11. Stephen W. Brown, *Voice of the New West: John G. Jackson, His Life and Times* (Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1985), 190-93.
12. *Ibid.*, 38-39.
13. Dorothy Davis, *History of Harrison County* (Clarksburg: American Association of Univ. Women, 1970), 832.
14. Phineas Chapin to his brother, 15 May 1817, John J. Davis Papers, West Virginia and Regional History Collection, West Virginia University Libraries, Morgantown, WV, hereafter referred to as Davis Papers. All references to the West Virginia and Regional History Collection are hereafter WVRHC.
15. Davis, *History*, 284.
16. Boorstin, *The Americans*, 117.

17. Davis, *History* , 284, 832. Unfortunately, there are no extant issues of Chapin's newspaper.
18. Chapin to S. Woods, 2 January 1830, Davis Papers.
19. S. Woods to Chapin, 16 January 1830, *ibid.*
20. Chapin to the Quarterly Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 6 December 1830, *ibid.*
21. Davis, *History* , 579-80.
22. Chapin to Dormer Chapin, 21 February 1844, Davis Papers; and Harrison County Deed Books, 21: 338; 22: 358, 438; 23: 268-69, 369, 371; 24: 110, 142, 206, 334; 31: 207; and 34: 106. Deed books are located at the Harrison County Courthouse, Clarksburg, WV.
23. Charles H. Ambler and Festus P. Summers, *West Virginia: The Mountain State* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1958), 150-55; and Davis, *History* , 620.
24. Davis, *History* , 470, 612.
25. Hamer, *New Towns* , 85, 211.
26. Henry Haymond, *History of Harrison County, West Virginia* (1910; reprint, Parsons: McClain Printing Company, 1940), 286-87.
27. Ezekiel Quillen to Emily Bartlett, 6 February 1845, Chapin Family Papers, WVRHC; and Randolph Academy Minute Book, 20 March 1840, Randolph Academy Papers, WVRHC, hereafter referred to as Randolph Academy Minute Book.
28. Davis, *History* , 608-09; and Randolph Academy Minute Book, 20 March 1840.
29. Boorstin, *The Americans* , 153-54; Davis, *History* , 608; and Randolph Academy Minute Book, 24 December 1804.
30. Dorothy Davis, *John George Jackson* (Parsons: McClain Printing Company, 1976), 33.
31. Randolph Academy Circular as quoted in Charles Henry Ambler, *A History of Education in West Virginia from Early Colonial Times to 1949* (Huntington: Standard Printing and Publishing Co., 1951), 75.
32. Davis, *John George Jackson* , 33; and Randolph Academy Minute Book, 15 August 1818, 3 June 1822, and 10 December 1834.
33. Randolph Academy Minute Book, 24 December 1804 and 15 August 1818.
34. *Ibid.*, 23 December 1821, 3 June 1822, 11 February 1828, and 8 June 1841.
35. Davis, *History* , 113.
36. Haymond, *History of Harrison County* , 237-38.
37. Davis, *History* , 166.
38. *Independent Virginian* (Clarksburg, Virginia), 18 August 1819.
39. *Ibid.*, 20 October 1819.
40. Hamer, *New Towns* , 130.
41. *Cooper's Clarksburg Register* , 12 November 1851.
42. *Ibid.*, 17 December 1851.
43. Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis* , 48-50.
44. Hamer, *New Towns* , 137.
45. Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis* , 40; and Hamer, *New Towns* , 137.
46. Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South* , 137.

47. John George Jackson was president of the company, Benjamin Wilson, Jr. and local lawyers James Pindall, William Martin, Lemuel E. Davisson, and Edwin S. Duncan served as directors. See Davis, John George Jackson, 390.
 48. Robert F. Hunter, "The Turnpike Movement in Virginia, 1816-1860," (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1957), 180-81.
 49. James D. Dilts, *The Great Road: The Building of the Baltimore and Ohio, the Nation's First Railroad, 1828-1853* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1993), 55.
 50. *Acts of the General Assembly of Virginia, 1826-27* (Richmond: Thomas Ritchie, 1827), 77; and Dilts, *The Great Road* , 56.
 51. Charles Henry Ambler, *A History of Transportation in the Ohio Valley* (Glendale, CA: The Arthur Clark Co., 1932), 186.
 52. Davis, *History* , 807-08.
 53. Dilts, *The Great Road* , 316.
 54. Richard C. Wade, *The Urban Frontier: Pioneer Life in Early Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Lexington, Louisville, and St. Louis* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1959), 334; and Hamer, *New Towns*, 20-23.
 55. Dilts, *The Great Road* , 316-18.
 56. *Ibid.*, 318.
 57. Hamer, *New Towns* , 54; and John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1986), 178-79.
 58. Harvey M. Rice, *The Life of Jonathan M. Bennett: A Study of the Virginias in Transition* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1943), 49-50.
 59. Carroll Bateman, *The Baltimore and Ohio: The Story of the Railroad that Grew Up with the United States* (Baltimore: Baltimore and Ohio Printing Plant, 1951), 12.
 60. *Acts of the General Assembly, 1850-51* (Richmond: William F. Ritchie, 1851), 69-70.
 61. *Cooper's Clarksburg Register* , 3 and 10 March 1852.
 62. *Ibid.*, 26 November 1851.
 63. *Ibid.*, 24 November 1852 and 21 September 1853; and *National Telegraph* (Clarksburg, Virginia), 28 November 1862.
 64. Rice, *Life of Jonathan M. Bennett*, 50-51. 65. *Ibid.*, 51.
 66. Boggess to Bennett, 10 July 1851 and 11 February 1852, Jonathan M. Bennett Papers, WVRHC, hereafter referred to as Bennett Papers.
 67. Rice, *Life of Jonathan M. Bennett*, 51.
 68. Dilts, *The Great Road*, 339.
 69. Rice, *Life of Jonathan M. Bennett*, 50.
 70. Thomas Swann, Address of Thomas Swann, Esq. on the Parkersburg Railroad (Baltimore: John Murphy and Co., 1852), 3-5, 16-24.
 71. Swann to Bennett, 10 April 1851, Bennett Papers.
 72. Garrett to Bennett, 12 May 1852, *ibid.*
 73. Rice, *Life of Jonathan M. Bennett* , 62-64.
 74. Davis, *History* , 807.
 75. Boorstin, *The Americans* , 123.
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