

MONTGOMERY COUNTY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH,
1776-1860,

by

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INTRODUCTION

This study evolved from my interest in Blacks and slavery in antebellum Virginia. As I surveyed the literature that has been written on the peculiar institution in the Old Dominion, I discovered that historians have assumed that slavery in the state's West and Southwest was either non-existent or very insignificant. Thus few historians have given the history of the Negro in the Southwest serious consideration. Not only has the topic of slavery in that area of the state been neglected, but its entire history as well. This dearth of scholarly interest in transmontane Virginia is in large part a consequence of the emphasis which has traditionally been placed upon the Tidewater and Piedmont. Scholars in the past centered their attention upon the East because its history was more typical of the state as a whole and because source materials such as diaries, journals, and farm account books were more readily available in the East than in the less literate West.

As I proceeded with preliminary research on Virginia slavery my curiosity was aroused by the silence of historians on the topic of slavery in the lands west of the Blue Ridge. Therefore, using Montgomery as a typical county of the Southwest, I began to investigate the slave system of the county to see how it compared to that of the East. I soon realized

that slavery in Montgomery was less important than I had hoped. For that reason, the emphasis of my work shifted from slavery as an institution to the reasons for the lack of slavery in the county.

The absence of a well structured slavery system in the county reflected the virtually undeveloped state of the county economy. Chattel slavery thrived in the United States mainly because of the labor needs of large scale staple crop agriculture. Montgomery County, isolated by the Blue Ridge Mountains from outlets for agricultural produce, had only primitive means of freight transportation. Furthermore, the county not only was shut off from the farm markets of the East, but from social and cultural exchanges as well. Therefore, until the second decade of the nineteenth century, the county's economy was almost entirely self-sufficient.

In order to establish a strong, well structured economic base, Montgomery needed internal improvements which would help make agricultural markets accessible. Responding to this need, private individuals constructed the Allegheny Turnpike in 1809, while the state helped finance the Roanoke Canal in 1815. These improvements supplied the county with its first markets for the sale of farm products. Moreover, with these early enterprises Montgomery enjoyed a marked increase in economic prosperity. The next decade (1820-1830) brought notable increases in agricultural output.

Montgomery's new prosperity served to strengthen the economic aspirations of its farmers who understood that greater success lay in a more extensive program of internal improvements. Such projects would defray transportation costs and increase profits by decreasing the amount of time needed to reach the eastern markets. But even though the Montgomery economy was emerging, it still did not possess the capital needed for private investment in such endeavors. Thus in their efforts to secure internal improvements the county's citizens, like other Southwesterners, turned to the state for support.

State aid for construction projects was hampered by a political obstacle--Virginia's system of representation. This system dated back to the American Revolution and was quite antiquated by 1820. Even as the West became more populated its voice in the General Assembly remained very weak. Hence, Westerners agitated for an equal voice in the control of the state and in the formulation of its internal improvement policies. In part then, the story of Montgomery's economic development rests in Virginia's political arena. Consequently, this thesis discusses the political struggles between the state's East and West.

As a result of the persistent efforts of Westerners, the state eventually adopted a more equitable system of representation for the West. Due to increased western

democratization the internal improvement programs for the West were greatly expanded. Among these projects and of major economic significance to Montgomery was the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. This improvement, which crossed the county in the early 1850's, provided quick, cheap access to the agricultural markets of the East. Furthermore, such advances in transportation stimulated not only agriculture, but other new industries as well. In effect, the railroad was the primary factor which revolutionized transportation in the Southwest and ushered in a decade of unprecedented prosperity. The economic success shared by Montgomery and the region helped to establish economic and social ties with the East that became a motivating force in the Southwest's decision to secede with the rest of the South in 1861.

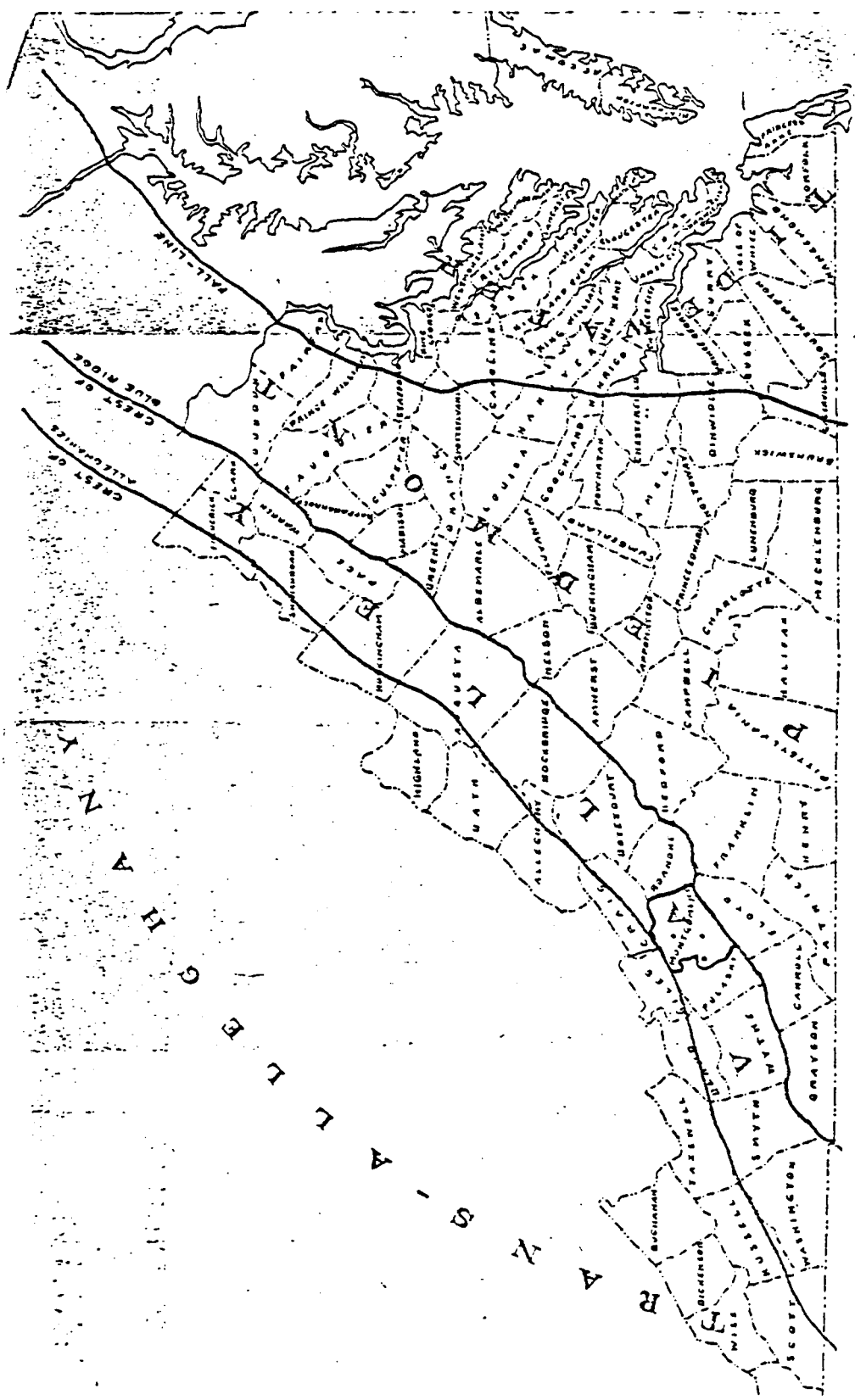
MONTGOMERY COUNTY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH, 1776-1860

At the lower end of Virginia's Shenandoah Valley lies Montgomery County, the gateway to the state's southwestern region. Carved from Fincastle County at the start of the American Revolution, the county initially contained nearly 12,000 miles of wilderness stretching from the southwest part of the Valley to the Ohio River.¹ Between 1790 and 1839 several counties were formed from Montgomery.² These changes left the county at its present approximate size, an irregular rectangular plateau lying between the crest of the Blue Ridge to the South and the crest of the Alleghenies to the North.³ The county's proximity to the bordering mountains limits the

¹Thomas P. Abernethy, Western Lands and the American Revolution (New York: 1937), 4-5; William W. Hening, The Statutes at Large of Virginia (13 vols., 1619-1821; Richmond: 1823; hereinafter cited as Hening, Statutes), IX, 257-61.

²Ralph M. Brown (compiler), The Legislative History of Montgomery County, Virginia (Typescript: 1943), 3-35; Morgan P. Robinson, "Virginia Counties: Those Resulting from Virginia Legislation." Virginia State Library Bulletin (Jan. 1916), IX, 61. Among the counties created from Montgomery were Wythe (1790), Giles (1806), Floyd (1831), and Pulaski (1839). Other minor alterations in the county's boundaries were made after 1839, but were insignificant.

³Montgomery straddles the "great eastern divide," which separates the watersheds of the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. All waters falling to the east of the divide flow into the Atlantic via the Roanoke and James Rivers, while water flowing to the west drain to the New River and the Gulf.



MAP I: THE GEOGRAPHICAL REGIONS OF VIRGINIA⁴

⁴Robinson, "Virginia Counties," 1.

growing season to 180 days, but also insures a generous annual rainfall, averaging forty-nine inches each year. Its altitude also gives it comfortable temperatures with a mean reading of fifty-three degrees. In addition to these attractions the early Montgomery pioneer found broad meadows, extensive stands of varied timber, and large quantities of game. The county therefore possessed many natural advantages which attracted settlers as early as the 1740's.⁵

Montgomery's position at the lower end of the Valley of Virginia earned it the title of "Gateway to the Southwest." In the eighteenth century, the Blue Ridge and Allegheny chains formed almost insurmountable obstacles to travellers heading inland from the eastern parts of the state. Therefore, before 1800, the Valley provided the only access to Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, and the western lands of Virginia and the Carolinas. Montgomery County lay directly across "Wilderness Road,"⁶ the route of an estimated 50,000

⁵Otis K. Rice, The Allegheny Frontier (Lexington, KY: 1970), 7; United States Department of Agriculture, Soils and Men (Washington, D.C.: 1938), 1022-23; D. T. Painter, "The Agricultural Development of Southwest Virginia," Virginia and the Virginia Record (Oct. 1950), IV, 22.

⁶Robert L. Kincaid, The Wilderness Road (New York: 1947), 149; Thomas Speed, The Wilderness Road (New York: 1971), 15. The Wilderness Road bisected Montgomery, passing through Christiansburg and crossing the New River at Ingle's Ferry (now Radford).

families who headed both south and west before the end of the eighteenth century.⁷

Many westering pioneers stopped in Montgomery and settled. A large portion of these early settlers were poor but industrious German, Swiss, and Scotch-Irish immigrants mixed with a sprinkling of Englishmen. Some of these persons came to take advantage of the county's low land prices. Others terminated their journeys fearing attacks from the Indians further west. Moreover, some immigrants simply liked the beauty of the area.⁸ Still, the county suffered from another handicap--its relative inaccessibility.

Montgomery's isolation kept property values low during the early years of its development. Furthermore, the county's early inhabitants found their opportunities for prosperity limited by their geographic isolation from the markets of Eastern Virginia. Montgomery farmers, like those of the rest of Southwest Virginia, faced several economic alternatives. They could ship products to northern Valley towns such as Winchester, or to lower Pennsylvania, but unfortunately, the high cost of transporting farm goods

⁷ Charles W. Crush (compiler and editor), The Montgomery County Story, 1776-1957 (Richmond: 1957), 55; Nettie-Schreiner Yantis, Montgomery County Virginia--Circa 1790 (Springfield, VA: 1972), i-ii.

⁸ John W. Wayland, "Germans of the Valley," Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (June 1903), X, 38; Nettie-Schreiner Yantis, Montgomery County, Virginia--Circa 1790, i-ii.

overland by wagon permitted the shipment of only the most valuable products. A second option was to sell crops to travellers heading west. The problem with this alternative was that many of these immigrants were poor with barely enough funds to complete their journeys. Therefore, they provided only a very limited market for Montgomery farmers. Most chose a third alternative--they ran self-sufficient operations with little if any dependence on markets or supplies outside the county. Indeed, the most striking aspect of Montgomery County life before 1820 was its large population of self-sufficient yeomen. These men raised their own animals for meat, grew their own fruits and vegetables, and bartered surpluses at the local store for such necessities as sugar, tea, and coffee. It was these independent yeomen who became the mainstay of the county's agricultural economy.⁹

Not only did the geography of Montgomery dictate the type of farmer who resided there, it also restricted the types of crops grown. With limited outlets for crops at

⁹Charles H. Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia, 1776-1861 (New York: 1964; hereinafter cited as Ambler, Sectionalism), 14; John P. Hale, Trans-Allegheny Pioneers (Raleigh: 1971), 158.

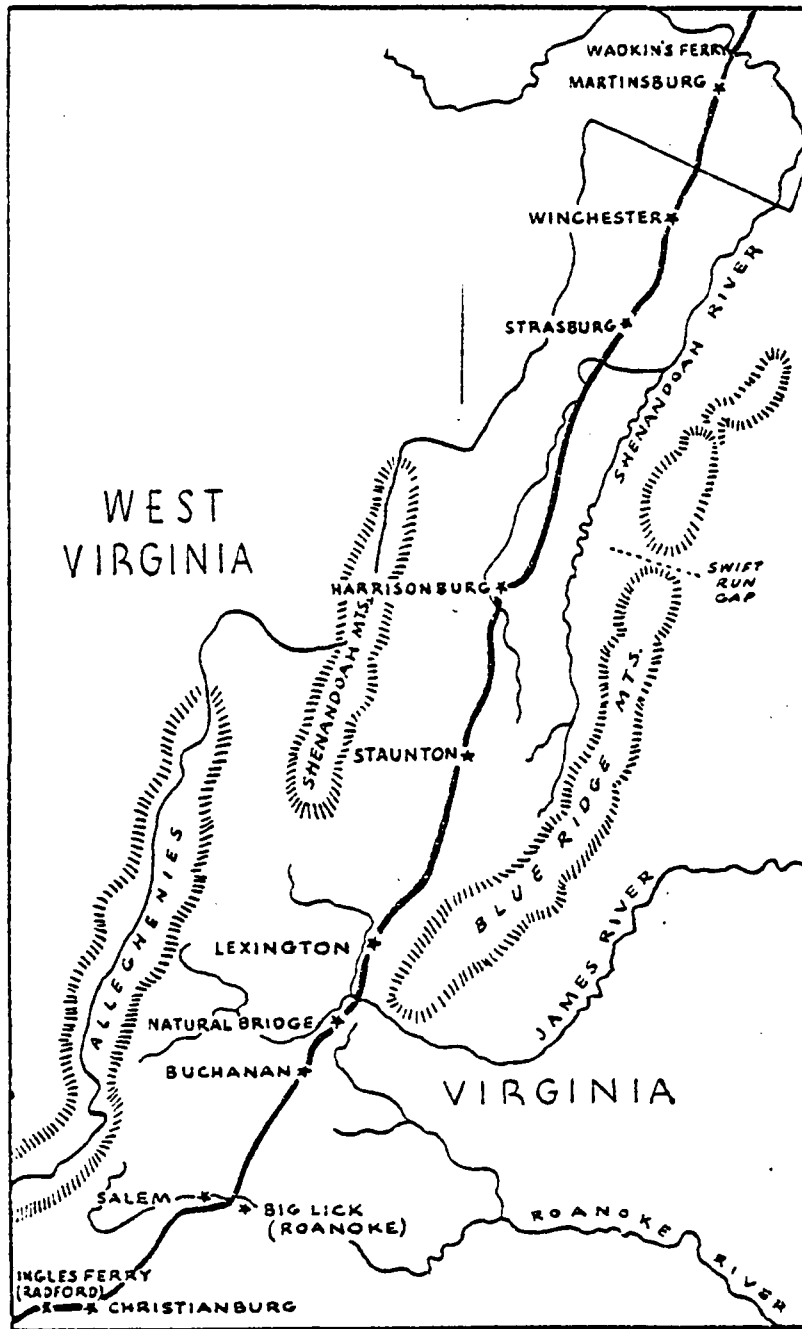
hand, farmers turned to corn, grain, beans, various fruits and vegetables, and small amounts of tobacco for their needs.¹⁰

Montgomery's topographical limitations meant that farmers could profitably market only relatively light and easily transported crops. Very early in the county's history the search for a marketable cash crop led farmers to develop cottage industries based on hemp, flax, and wool production.¹¹ These crops in their processed forms were easier to transport since they could be packed onto horses and taken across the mountains.¹² Moreover, by processing hemp, flax, and wool into cloth, Montgomery producers were able to increase the value of their crop and consequently minimize freight expenses. Therefore, the primary money crops west of the Blue Ridge before 1810 were hemp, flax, and wool. While these were very

¹⁰General Edward Carrington, "Home Manufacturing in Virginia in 1791," William and Mary Quarterly (April 22, 1922; hereinafter cited as Carrington, "Home Manufacturing."), II, ser. 2, no. 2, 141; Rice, The Allegheny Frontier, 3.

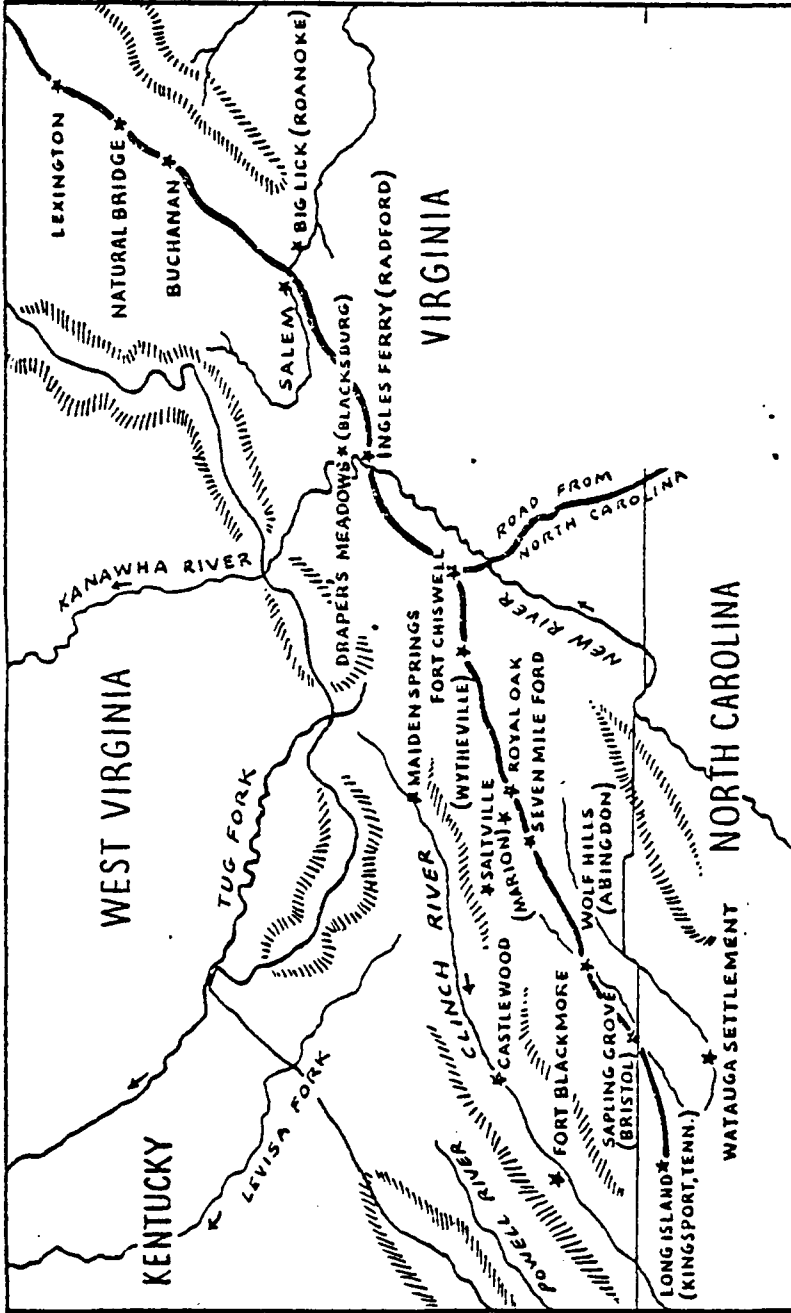
¹¹Carrington, "Home Manufacturing," 141. In a letter to Alexander Hamilton in 1791, Carrington noted that "the upper county supplies our markets with great quantities of Hemp, said to be equal to any in the world, flax is also here produced in high perfection, and in great quantities. . . ." He also stated that "for supplying the article of Wool this part of Virginia is favorable."

¹²U. S. Bureau of the Census, A Statement of the Arts and Manufactures of the United States for the Year 1810, 89. The census of 1810 recorded 557 looms and two fulling mills in Montgomery County. Home industries in that year produced a total of 92,005 yards of flaxen and hemp goods, and 14,352 yards of woolen fabric.



MAP II: THE VALLEY OF VIRGINIA IN 1776¹³

¹³Kincaid, The Wilderness Road, 41.



MAP III: THE WILDERNESS ROAD IN 1775¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibid., 69.

important commodities in the county's economy, they provided only limited opportunities for profit. Fiber production did not dramatically change the county's basic economic self-sufficiency.

Cloth production contributed to the growth of sheep raising as a substantial factor in Montgomery's economy. In addition to producing wool, sheep could be herded over the mountain to market.¹⁵ The county's topography further enhanced the attractiveness of grazing, being hilly and therefore well suited for livestock.¹⁶ Farmers raised

¹⁵Carrington, "Home Manufacturing," 141; Colonel William Preston, Last Will and Testament, Mar. 29, 1777, Will Book, Montgomery County Records (Christiansburg, VA; hereinafter cited as MCR), B, 55-61. At his death, Preston, one of Montgomery's more successful farmers left an estate that included 239 head of livestock appraised at \$1,791.75.

¹⁶Emmett B. Fields, "The Agricultural Population of Virginia, 1850-1860" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Vanderbilt University: 1953), 46, 63-67; Rice, The Allegheny Frontier, 157; D. T. Painter, "The Agricultural Development of Southwest Virginia," Virginia and the Virginia Record. (Oct. 1950), IV, 22-23.

large numbers of cattle, hogs, and horses as well as sheep.¹⁷

Montgomery's best farmland and most of its agricultural production lay near the center of the county. Along its southeastern border the Roanoke River rises, broadening as it leaves the county and enters an extensive valley. Although the distance between Montgomery's fertile plateau and the head of the Roanoke Valley was relatively short, Allegheny Mountain blocked access to the Valley and points to the east. A narrow dirt path crossed the mountain, but it was often impassable in bad weather and was too narrow for freight transportation when good weather conditions prevailed. According to state law this "road" was to be kept in passable condition by those county inhabitants who did not pay taxes on two or more mature slaves. All white men were required to work on the road for a specified number

¹⁷ Charles H. Ambler, The Life and Diary of John Floyd, (Richmond: 1918, hereinafter cited as Ambler, Diary of John Floyd), 83-85. In 1828, John Floyd, a Montgomery resident and later governor of Virginia, placed great emphasis upon the county as a beef producer. Writing from Richmond he stated that "the nearest point to this city where is fed for market, intended as proof beef, is Montgomery. . . . In that county there are many extensive farms, some perhaps of from fifteen hundred to two thousand acres, laid down in grass to graze the ox for market. This is the precise point at which flour and other heavy products of the farm cease to be of value to the producer on account of the high price of transportation resulting from the distance to market and the bad conditions of the roads". . . . Besides this, stock sheep are often put out over the same ground to follow the fat cattle and become the finest sort of mutton."

of days each year. Since the cost of the road's upkeep in both time and taxes was so great, Montgomery inhabitants requested their two delegates in the General Assembly, Andrew Lewis and John Ingles, to procure some type of state aid.¹⁸ Therefore, Lewis and Ingles responded by getting a bill through the state legislature in December, 1805, "establishing a Turnpike from the head of the Roanoke River over the Allegheny Mountain."¹⁹ The legislature then appointed a committee of Montgomery residents to accept the low bid for the project.²⁰

A Montgomery resident, George Hancock, procured the contract for constructing the Allegheny Turnpike. A native of Chesterfield County, Hancock had a distinguished background of public service. He had read law in Powhatan, was a former Commonwealth's Attorney for Fincastle, and had served in the Virginia legislature and in the United States House of Representatives. By 1802, Hancock owned over 1530 acres of land located on the north and south forks of the

¹⁸Walter K. Wood, "The Allegheny Turnpike and Internal Improvements" (M.A. thesis, V.P.I. and S.U.: 1969; hereinafter cited as Wood, "Allegheny Turnpike"), 19.

¹⁹The Acts of the General Assembly, Revised Code to 1803 (Richmond: 1803; hereinafter cited as Acts of the General Assembly), 26-27.

²⁰Ibid., 27. The Commissioners were John Ingles, Andrew Lewis, Daniel Trigg, Gordon Cloyd, Charles Taylor, Henry Edmundson, James Craig, John M. Taylor, and James Charlton.

Roanoke River. Most of this land was far from existing roads and thus suffered from limited accessibility. Therefore Hancock's transportation needs as well as any hope of profitable returns from his investment prompted him to bid on the project.²¹

The turnpike construction, which began in 1806, was completed in 1809. The macadamized road was over seven miles long and was twenty-five feet wide. It ran from the Christiansburg side of the top of Allegheny Mountain to the south fork of the Roanoke River and provided the first real access to the Roanoke Valley for Montgomery farmers.²²

Hancock's agricultural endeavors proved successful, but his profits remained limited by the county's relative inaccessibility. The obvious need for improved roads had encouraged Hancock to construct the pike. Moreover, his investment in the road returned a reasonable profit as well as improving transportation and access to outside agricultural markets for county farmers.²³ At Hancock's death in 1820, George Hancock, Jr., took over the enterprise. Apparently the younger Hancock was more interested in farming

²¹Wood, "The Allegheny Turnpike," 20-22. Hancock served in the General Assembly from Fincastle from 1784-1787 and in 1792.

²²Ibid., 19.

²³Ibid., 25-26. Between 1817-1827, the Turnpike averaged over \$600 profit per year.

than the turnpike business. In 1828, he sold his interest in the road to Henry Edmundson and Elijah McClanahan, and moved to Kentucky.²⁴

The early success of the Allegheny Turnpike attracted Edmundson's interest. Born in Pennsylvania, Edmundson had moved to Botetourt as a child. In 1799, he relocated in Montgomery accumulating 2,000 acres of land by 1827. Edmundson not only obtained half-interest in the pike, he also purchased Hancock's home, Fotheringay Plantation. He was involved in a variety of enterprises but devoted his major efforts to growing tobacco.²⁵

Since Montgomery was so isolated from eastern agricultural markets, it is not surprising that early settlers in the county raised only very small amounts of tobacco to fill local needs. After 1815, the completion of the Roanoke Canal greatly enhanced the production of large crops of tobacco in Montgomery. The canal paralleled the Roanoke River from Salem, Virginia, to Weldon, North Carolina, providing access to the tobacco markets of eastern Carolina. By traversing the Allegheny Turnpike and travelling down

²⁴Ibid., 19-22, 28, 36.

²⁵Ibid., 32-39. Besides running the Turnpike and farming, Edmundson also ran an inn and was a land speculator.

the Valley to Salem, the Montgomery farmer could now ship his tobacco to eastern markets via the Roanoke Canal.²⁶

Tobacco production in Montgomery was also prompted by a surge in that crop's price around 1800. Between 1790 and 1820, the price of tobacco grew to exceed pre-Revolutionary levels. But in the two decades after 1820, competition from tobacco raisers in the western states lowered profits. Competition from the west endangered profits, but soil depletion, erosion of the thin mountain soil, and a relatively short growing season, all combined to produce inferior grades of tobacco in Montgomery. These disadvantages and high freight expenses restricted profits to only the most successful tobacco farmers. Small or non-existent profits greatly hampered Edmundson's tobacco operation.²⁷ Therefore he was willing to try his hand at a more rewarding venture-- the Allegheny Turnpike. Shortly after Edmundson purchased the pike in 1828, it supplanted tobacco farming as his primary concern.

²⁶William McCauley, The History of Roanoke County, Virginia (Chicago: 1902), 115-16; David F. Thornton, "Salem," Virginia and the Virginia Record (Aug. 1954), v. 76, 18. The Roanoke Navigation Company finished construction of the sluices and dams for the canal in 1815. The canal was extremely important to all tobacco farmers within a fifty mile radius of Salem. Plans to enhance the usage of the canal by building large tobacco warehouses collapsed with the onset of the Panic of 1819.

²⁷Joseph C. Robert, The Story of Tobacco in America (Chapel Hill: 1949), 57-58; Wood, "Allegheny Turnpike," 38, 40. Between 1820 and 1831, tobacco prices fell from ten to twelve cents, to four to six cents per pound.

Edmundson's career is particularly interesting because it suggests several things about Montgomery's economic development during the 1820's. His attempt at large scale tobacco cultivation is among the earliest efforts in the county at staple crop agriculture. This trial apparently was made feasible by the significant, if somewhat limited, transportation improvements represented by the opening of the Allegheny Turnpike and Roanoke Canal. Hence, it seems a reasonable conclusion that these breakthroughs in the county's isolation from Eastern Virginia precipitated experimentation with staple crop agriculture. This development fostered a search for the labor supply necessary for such an enterprise.

Since white labor was scarce and very expensive, Edmundson resorted to slaves to fill his labor requirements.²⁸ These bondsmen served both as field hands in his tobacco operations and as workers on the turnpike when repairs were required. His actions suggest that slavery had become by the mid-1820's, a more profitable venture than

²⁸George Hancock to Henry Edmundson Bill of Sale, May 18, 1828, Edmundson Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (hereinafter cited as VHS); Allegheny Turnpike Account Book, July 1828, Edmundson Family Papers, VHS. Edmundson bought a slave family (husband, wife and infant) from Hancock for \$795. He also spent \$4000 for "Negroes" although the exact number of slaves involved cannot be established. Edmundson is discussed here because he is the only relatively large Montgomery slaveowner from this period about which source materials exist. He is not presented here as a typical slaveholder, but instead because his career shows that large scale slave agriculture was at least possible.

before the advent of these innovations. Edmundson's career therefore supports the thesis that slavery became a significant factor in the county's economy after these developments.

When Montgomery was created in 1776, slavery already was well established in Virginia. In the Southwest however, the conditions which had made slavery such a vital economic factor in the East were absent until long after initial settlement.²⁹ In the state's Tidewater and Piedmont sections, slavery was a vital and integral part of the economy and society. Agriculturalists in the state's eastern regions had built profitable tobacco operations based on slave labor. Their success stemmed from abundant water transportation which provided relatively easy access to tobacco markets. By 1776, not only was slavery a firmly established characteristic of the eastern economy with its large plantations, but also represented the most effective means of social mobility since the number of slaves possessed dictated one's position in society. This phenomenon was not yet true of the state's western settlements.

²⁹Winthrop D. Jordan, The White Man's Burden (New York: 1974), 58.

In fact, the status of the peculiar institution in the Southwest differed substantially from the East.³⁰

Although no reliable records are available to date the appearance of Montgomery's first bondsmen, they were present at the county's formation. Tradition has it that the first slaves west of the Blue Ridge belonged to William Ingles, the owner of Ingles' Ferry on the New River.³¹ However, slaves were of limited economic importance during Montgomery's early years because farmers did not raise the labor intensive staple crops which effectively utilized slave labor. Early pioneers may have used some slave labor to clear land and prepare it for planting. The majority of these early slaves probably belonged to easterners who forged west in search of fertile land and new opportunities. Thus the first slaves to settle in Montgomery County came in the baggage train of the general westward migration so characteristic of American growth.

Slavery in Montgomery grew slowly in the early national period. Natural increase, the immigration of new settlers

³⁰Jackson Turner Main, "The Distribution of Property in Post-Revolutionary Virginia," Mississippi Valley Historical Review (Sept. 1954), v. 41, 255. According to Main, farms of the Southwest tended to be small to middle sized when compared with those of the Tidewater and Piedmont. And although fewer men of wealth resided in the Southwest, that area had the highest percentage of property owners in the population. Moreover, the East tended to have larger than average slaveholdings than the less populated West.

³¹Hale, Allegheny Pioneers, 128. Ingles reportedly is believed to have brought his slaves west around 1750.

with their slaves, and the gradually increasing labor needs of the farmers, contributed to the county's slave population of almost 1,200 by 1820. Although transportation routes to the Eastern markets still had not been effectively established, improvements wrought by the construction of the Allegheny Turnpike and Roanoke Canal contributed to an expanded scale for some Montgomery farming operations.³² These more extensive agricultural endeavors involved increased amounts of labor.³³

In view of the fact that there was little need for large numbers of laborers in Montgomery's generally self-sufficient agricultural economy, it is not surprising that the county's slave population was relatively small. In 1790, Montgomery boasted only 828 slaves in a total population of 13,228, or slightly more than six percent. By 1810, the slave population had gradually increased to

³²Bruce D. Tuttle, "Colonel William Preston, 1729-1783," (M.A. Thesis, V.P.I. & S.U.: 1971; hereinafter cited as Tuttle, "Colonel Preston"), 42, 48-49. One such large farmer was Colonel Preston who had grown rather wealthy as a land speculator in western properties. Preston owned two Southwest Virginia plantations--Smithfield, of some 1,860 acres in Montgomery, and Greenfield consisting of 2,175 acres in Botetourt. On these farms he grew corn, grains, small amounts of tobacco, and hemp. Preston was one of Montgomery's "larger farmers."

³³Colonel William Preston, Last Will and Testament, Mar. 29, 1777, Will Book, MCR, B., 55-61. At his death Preston owned forty-two slaves valued at \$4431.65.

almost 1,100 people and had reached 1,200 in 1820.³⁴ Over the thirty year period, 1790-1820, the slave population grew at a steady and gradual pace. But its most significant growth came in the single decade from 1820 to 1830. In that period, the number of slaves increased from less than 1,200 to over 2,000. This represents an increase of sixty-nine percent, while in the three previous decades the combined increases were only forty-four percent.³⁵

TABLE I
Slave and White Populations of Montgomery
1790-1830³⁶

<u>Populations</u>	<u>1790</u>	<u>1800</u>	<u>1810</u>	<u>1820</u>	<u>1830</u>
Slave	828	968	1,099	1,196	2,026
White	12,394	8,037	7,239	7,506	10,224
Total	13,228	8,295	8,395	8,733	12,306

The pattern of slave population growth between 1790 and 1830 is paralleled by increases in the number of

³⁴ Although it is difficult to equate population figures for the period 1790-1830 because of the constant shifting of Montgomery's boundaries, some positive deductions can be reached from the available data.

³⁵ Between 1790 and 1830, the slave population increased by 1,198 slaves. In the three decades, 1790 to 1820, the number of slaves increased by 368, while in the following decade, the increase was 830 bonded inhabitants.

³⁶ Figures and compilations used in Table I are from the Manuscript Census Returns for Montgomery County, 1790-1830. There were no boundary changes in the county between 1806-1831.

slaveowners with large slaveholdings.³⁷ In 1810, only three people in Montgomery owned more than thirty slaves. By 1820, five had reached this status, and in 1830, nine persons held thirty or more bondsmen.³⁸ Although these numbers represent a very small sample, the rapid rate of increase is nonetheless significant, further indicating that relatively large scale production had become feasible.

Internal improvements such as the Allegheny Turnpike and the Roanoke Canal made the growth of the size of production units possible. To work these farms slaves were engaged since free labor was almost non-existent. Those persons who might have served as free laborers usually purchased their own land in the county or moved further west. There was little incentive for workers to labor for another if they could acquire their own farms. Furthermore, those whites who did choose to work as farm laborers were

³⁷"The Letters of John Preston," William and Mary Quarterly (July 22, 1922), II, ser. 2, 191; Entry John Preston Account Book, Jan. 23, 1811, Preston Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia (hereinafter cited as VHS). In 1811, John Preston owned seventy-nine slaves supervised by an overseer on his "Horseshoe Bend Plantation." Apparently these were more slaves than necessary since he was often trying to hire them out.

³⁸U. S. Bureau of the Census, Population Schedules of the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Censuses of the United States: 1810, 1820, 1830, Virginia (hereinafter cited as Mss. Census). Between 1810 and 1820 the rate of increase of large slaveholders was 67%, while in the next decade alone the large owners grew by some 80%. Over the same two periods, the white population increased by 3.6 and 36.2%.

in great demand and subsequently charged high wages. Therefore, slave labor became more economically feasible than free labor.

The increase in the number of slaves, slaveowners, and the size of slave holdings provide the most significant single gauge of Montgomery's economic growth. In Virginia's agricultural slave society, the number of slaves in a given locality reflected the level of that area's economy. The more slaves a region boasted, the more advanced its agricultural development. Therefore the increase in the number of slaves, slaveholders, and the size of slave holdings in Montgomery indicate that the economy characterized by slow growth before 1820, had suddenly boomed. This sudden surge of agricultural development resulted from internal improvements in Southwestern Virginia between 1809 and 1820.³⁹ Even such small scale improvements as the Allegheny Turnpike and the Roanoke Canal had a profound effect on Montgomery's economic development.

In spite of these advances, the fruits of the turnpike and canal whetted rather than satisfied Montgomery's appetite for such enterprises. Since local resources were insufficient to attack the larger scale improvements that were needed to open up the region, the county began to

³⁹Wood, "The Allegheny Turnpike," 58.

look beyond its own borders for support of such endeavors. Applying for state aid seemed to be the next logical step.

Although the state had invested in several internal construction projects such as the James and Potomac River Companies before 1815, the General Assembly was generally reluctant to back internal improvements. Private capital had financed virtually all of the improvements which had boosted the Montgomery economy. In lending financial aid to such projects the Commonwealth faced two problems. First, nearly all of these projects lacked efficient planning and construction. This difficulty occurred because private companies could seldom afford the services of trained engineers. Second, the demand for support exerted upon state resources was much more than it could meet. Since its earliest days the line of the Virginia frontier constantly moved westward until eventually it crossed the Blue Ridge and beyond. Thus the constantly expanding state required many internal improvements to tie the several regions of the Commonwealth together. But the numerous applications that flooded the Assembly annually proved too large a task since most areas of the state sought funds for improvement projects. Consequently, politicians often found themselves entangled in a maze of local jealousies

with each locality arguing that it needed funds more desperately than the others.⁴⁰

In response to this pressure, the legislature moved to organize internal improvements in the Old Dominion. The General Assembly created a Board of Public Works in February, 1816, to "collect and prepare . . . the facts and information necessary to cast sufficient light upon each application for support."⁴¹ Financial aid for such projects came not from special appropriations, but from an established general improvement fund. The Board, consisting of the Governor, State Treasurer, Attorney General, and ten private citizens, managed the fund. The ten individuals acted as representatives for each of the state's four geographic regions, three each from the West and Piedmont, and two each from the Valley and Tidewater. But since the eastern dominated legislature appointed these persons, they tended to represent the views of the East's leaders rather than of their respective geographic regions. The Board also employed a state engineer to plan and supervise its construction projects.⁴²

⁴⁰ Carter Goodrich, "The Virginia System of Mixed Enterprise," Political Science Quarterly (Sept. 1949, hereinafter cited as Goodrich, "The Virginia System of Mixed Enterprise"), LXIV, no. 3, 355-59.

⁴¹ Ibid., 359.

⁴² Ibid., 359-61.

The Board of Public Works promoted a mixed enterprise system to meet Virginia's construction needs. This approach meant that internal improvements would be financed jointly by the state and localities. To entice both the capital and initiative for such projects from localities and private groups of investors, the Board instituted two rules. One stipulation required the state to purchase two-fifths of the investment stock needed to fund specific construction projects, while the locality would provide the remaining three-fifths. The second rule provided that the state pay a return of six percent to all private investors on their stock. The Board hoped that these policies would give lucrative investment incentives to the public.⁴³ However, these policies only served to undermine the Board's goal of fostering the construction of internal improvements. In some parts of the state, especially the West and Southwest, it was extremely difficult to secure the capital needed for investment in these projects. Thus, localities such as Montgomery, which badly needed small scale internal improvements to help develop their infant economies, could seldom qualify for state assistance because of a lack of necessary funds. Westerners, perceiving the board to primarily reflect eastern interests, resented these policies.⁴⁴

⁴³Ibid., 361-62.

⁴⁴Ibid., 362.

The Board further antagonized westerners by concentrating its attention upon one project in particular--the James River and Kanawha Canal. By constructing a canal through the Alleghenies to link the James and Kanawha Rivers, easterners hoped to tap the lucrative Ohio trade. Although this project promised to boost the state's economy in general, and the profits of eastern aristocrats and merchants in particular, it did virtually nothing for the West. Easterners eager for western support of the canal claimed that it would bolster the western economy. But according to one opponent of the project, it was

undertaken on a scale not called for by the trade of the county or counties bordering on the line of the improvement, and with a view to accomodate an extensive trade from the exterior . . . it was in truth a great State affair, the expense of which could neither be born by the internal trade on the line of the improvement, nor hazarded by individual enterprise.⁴⁵

In effect, the development of Virginia's supposedly insignificant western trade was of little concern to eastern leaders who wanted immediate gains rather than long run profits. On the other hand, westerners desired economic

⁴⁵Wayland F. Dunaway, The History of the James River and Kanawha Company (New York: 1922, hereinafter cited as Dunaway, James River and Kanawha Company), 76-80; Goodrich, "The Virginia System of Mixed Enterprise," 362-64.

development and were not worried about profits. They "wanted advantages, not dividends."⁴⁶

Disaffection with such measures prompted the county to investigate political alternatives which might influence the Board. This situation led county residents increasingly to explore political solutions for their economic difficulties. Unfortunately the nature of Virginia's political representation posed significant obstacles to the county's success.

Since Montgomery County lay West of the Blue Ridge it suffered from a political disadvantage that limited its opportunities to gain economic assistance from the state. As the line of settlement in Virginia advanced westward, the state's Eastern establishment effectively resisted reapportionment to provide equitable representation in the General Assembly. Consequently, although the West's population increased, that region's voice in the legislature remained weak. The East continued to hold the same proportion of power in 1820 as in 1776. Such an arrangement proved to be a thorn in the side of the western counties

⁴⁶ Goodrich, "The Virginia System of Mixed Enterprise," 375- 78, 384- 85; Dunaway, James River and Kanawha Company, 48-50, 57-60, 78. A committee investigation in 1830 reported that the expenditures on regional internal improvements were as follows: Tidewater and Piedmont - \$618,208; Valley and Transmontane - \$83,805. These figures reflect a per capita output of 26 cents in the Valley and Transmontane while this expense per white person east of the Blue Ridge was \$1.65.

since eastern counties possessed large enough majorities to thwart western designs for state aid for economic development.⁴⁷

Realizing that their political plight limited their access to economic aid, westerners demanded proportionate representation through reapportionment of the state. Easterners generally opposed such reapportionment plans because it "would give representation to the labor of the West without taxation, while the labor of the East would be unrepresented, yet taxed," and because this would allow the "internal improvement element of the state to gain too much power."⁴⁸ Easterners feared that once westerners with few slaves obtained more legislative power, they would place heavy taxes upon the East's slave property in order to foster their internal improvement schemes. Eastern legislators also alleged that western yeomen were too irresponsible to legislate for themselves. Consequently, eastern legislators acted to block western reapportionment and internal improvements. Under these circumstances it was hardly surprising that leaders of the West rallied to demand political equality.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Jordan, The White Man's Burden, 58.

⁴⁸Julian A. C. Chandler, Representation in Virginia, (Baltimore: 1896), 33.

⁴⁹Ibid., 33-35; Ambler, The Diary of John Floyd, 87; Goodrich, "The Virginia System of Mixed Enterprise," 376.

In 1816, western delegates meeting in Staunton attempted to solidify western support for a state constitutional convention. Westerners perceived such a convention to be the best vehicle to reform the state's system of representation. Montgomery voters in the election for a delegate to the Staunton convention cast their ballots for Henry Edmundson, the owner of the Allegheny Turnpike, whose deep interest in internal improvements has been discussed above.⁵⁰ The county's choice of Edmundson as a delegate suggests that the economic issue of western internal improvements was tied to the political issue of representation.

At Staunton, Edmundson wanted the General Assembly to sanction a constitutional convention. His level-headed conservatism discouraged him from supporting the more extreme measures in Staunton calling for a western constitutional convention without the Assembly's approval. Such proposals and the ever present whispers of secession eventually led to criticism of the Staunton meeting as a Virginian Hartford Convention.⁵¹ This type of reaction

⁵⁰Dana E. McKnight, "Henry Alonzo Edmundson" (M.A. Thesis, V.P.I. and S.U.: 1971), 6-7; Richmond Enquirer, June 8, 1816; August 19, 24, 1816. Henry Edmundson represented Montgomery County in the Virginia House of Delegates, on and off, from 1818 to 1827.

⁵¹Richmond Enquirer, June 28, 1825.

combined with the radical spirit of many hot headed westerners, apparently influenced Montgomery's decision not to attend a second Staunton convention in 1825. Although county residents shared sentiments with other westerners on equal representation in the state legislature, they preferred to avoid extralegal measures to accomplish their goal. Therefore Montgomery County shied away from the more extreme proposals offered at the Staunton gathering.⁵²

At the Staunton conventions of 1816 and 1825 western delegates often discussed increased representation in terms of economic developments and internal improvements. According to one "Upper Country Gentleman,"

the whole rich extensive valley from Martinsburg to Abingdon trades to Baltimore and Philadelphia. The flourishing towns of Winchester, Woodstock, New Market, Harrisonburg, Staunton, Lexington, Fincastle, Salem, Christiansburg, Evansham, and Abingdon are all supplied with goods from the cities above named, and the connection between them is much more familiar than it is with their own metropolis. . . . The interest of the two sections lands in different directions. What a powerful argument does this circumstance furnish in favor of an equal representation.⁵³

⁵²Ibid., August 31, 1816. Edmundson signed a protest to the proceedings of the Staunton Convention of 1816 explaining his reservations about the meeting.

⁵³Richmond, Enquirer, June 8, 1816.

At the end of both the 1816 and 1825 conventions the delegates signed petitions that asked the General Assembly for a constitutional convention. But the Assembly ignored these requests as they had eight previous petitions from western counties that had been presented between 1802 and 1815.⁵⁴

In 1827, under strong public pressure from the West and increasing pressure from the East,⁵⁵ the Assembly finally authorized a statewide referendum on the issue of holding a constitutional convention. Montgomery voters expressed overwhelming support for the January, 1828 referendum as did their western neighbors. Easterners divided over the issue, but even so, the referendum passed by more than fifty-six percent of the total votes cast.⁵⁶

As expected, the Constitutional Convention of 1829 became a political battlefield where the issue of internal improvements for the West hinged upon the fight for equal

⁵⁴Ibid., August 31, 1816; Chandler, Representation in Virginia, 23-30. Petitions to the Assembly were presented in 1802, 1803, 1805, 1806, 1807, 1810, 1811, and 1815.

⁵⁵Richmond Enquirer, May 13, 1825. Eastern as well as western counties received cordial invitations to attend the 1825 Staunton meeting, and a few eastern localities did attend. But their concern dealt with ending the freehold and establishing universal manhood suffrage. Still the presence of Eastern delegates at the convention served to undermine the Eastern legislator's opposition to a constitutional convention.

⁵⁶Chandler, Representation in Virginia, 29-31. The referendum passed with 21,896 in favor, and 16,637 opposed.

western representation. The debates dwelt upon the system of representation that would be used in the reapportionment of the state. Western delegates championed representation based exclusively upon the number of the state's white inhabitants. Easterners, since they paid taxes on their slaves, wanted reapportionment based upon both the slave and free population. This mixed system became the formula for representation offered in the final draft of the new constitution. Moreover, the revised document basically retained the freehold suffrage intact.⁵⁷

Gordon Cloyd, a large plantation owner and Montgomery's delegate to the convention, refused to accept the weak compromise represented by the revised constitution, and cast his vote against it on the final convention tally.⁵⁸ Cloyd, like Edmundson, viewed equal representation as a means of securing internal improvements for the West by placing more westerners in Richmond. Cloyd's constituents supported his decision to oppose the new document.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 33-34.

⁵⁸ Hugh Blair Grigsby, The Virginia Convention of 1829-1830 (New York: 1969), 104. Ninety-six delegates attended the convention. Fifty-five delegates voted for the final draft of the constitution while forty opposed it. One member of the convention was absent when the vote was taken.

Montgomery voted 670 to 194 against ratification.⁵⁹ Although most of the other western counties also voted against the revised document,⁶⁰ it passed by more than 10,000 votes out of a total of 42,000.⁶¹

The revised constitution increased the amount of western representation in the General Assembly from thirty-three to forty-one percent of the total number of seats. Under a system of representation based upon the number of white inhabitants, the West would have obtained forty-six percent of the legislative seats. Most western counties

⁵⁹The Proceedings and Debates of the Virginia State Constitution, 1829-1830 (Richmond: 1830), 903. Since no other sources exist on Cloyd it is impossible to substantiate his economic position. But in all probability he opposed the Constitution of 1830 due to western economic considerations.

⁶⁰Grigsby, The Virginia Convention of 1829-1830, 102. Montgomery, Wythe, Grayson, and Giles Counties comprised Virginia's twelfth district. Besides Cloyd, the representatives of this district were Hesley Chapman, John P. Mathews, and William Oglesby. All four men voted against the new constitution at the convention as did their counties in the general election in April 1831. Of the 15,563 votes against the constitution, 13,337 or 86% of the votes came from the West.

⁶¹William C. Pendleton, The Political History of Appalachian Virginia (Dayton, Va.: 1927), 126-27; Chandler, Representation in Virginia, 33, 43-44. The new constitution passed by a vote of 26,055 to 15,563.

refused to ratify a document which provided less than total equality.⁶²

The blow to Montgomery's efforts to find alternative support for economic improvements represented by the failure to obtain sufficient legislative representation was not the only reverse the county suffered. In April, 1837, a combination of national fiscal policies precipitated the great panic of that year. This severe economic setback, which lasted well into 1845, struck hard at the fledgling economy of Montgomery County and the rest of Southwest Virginia.⁶³

Since Montgomery depended so heavily upon an agricultural economy, the price decline of farm products during the Panic provides an excellent indicator of the effect of the depression. In the Lynchburg markets, which handled most of the Southwest's agricultural products, the prices of corn, wheat, and tobacco declined by one half to two thirds of its 1836 values by 1844. Wheat fell from \$1.75 to \$0.65 per bushel, while corn prices per bushel decreased from

⁶²Virginia Historical Register, "Various Intelligence: Census of Virginia" (April 1851), IV, II; Chandler, Representation in Virginia, 43-44. All but eleven of the forty western counties opposed the Constitution of 1830. The West cast 13,337 or 86% of the total number of votes cast in opposition to the constitution. Only two eastern counties opposed it.

⁶³Reginald C. McGrane, The Panic of 1837 (New York: 1965), 113; Glyndon G. Van Deusen, The Jacksonian Era (New York: 1959), 116-18.

\$1.00 to \$0.50. Meanwhile, tobacco prices which declined steadily after the early 1820's due to overproduction and stiff competition from the states to Virginia's west, plummeted even further.⁶⁴

Another indication of the effects of the Panic is revealed in the region's slave population. The General Assembly carved Floyd and Pulaski Counties from Montgomery in the thirties. Thus comparative analysis of slavery for the county from census records of 1830 and 1840 perhaps proves very little. But careful analysis of the slave population for the entire Valley region reveals that the number of bondsmen declined during the years of the Panic, although the Valley experienced no slave decreases before the decade 1830 to 1840.⁶⁵

During the period 1820 to 1830, the positive effects of Montgomery's internal improvements led to a large increase in its slave population. As economic stagnation and decline

⁶⁴Wood, "Allegheny Turnpike," 40, 45. Between 1837 and 1844 the price of flour dropped from \$8.50 to \$3.50 per barrel.

⁶⁵Richmond Times, January 27, 1851. The Valley included the counties of Clark, Warren, Page, Rockingham, Augusta, Rockbridge, Botetourt, Roanoke, Montgomery, Pulaski, Wythe, Smyth, and Washington. Between 1830 and 1840, the slave population declined from 34,772 to 33,697, a loss of 1,075 persons. Although this figure represents a decrease of only 3.1% of the total slave population of the Valley, this was the first decline in the number of slave inhabitants since 1790.

stalled the county's economic growth, labor needs decreased, often making it more profitable for farmers to sell their slaves than to retain them. Moreover, during the Panic of 1837 a large slave market existed in the nation's new slave territories in the southwest. Thus in the late 1830's and into the 1840's the farmers of the Southwest sold many of their slaves. A substantial influx of slave traders into Montgomery and the entire Southwest reflected the economic straits characteristic of most of the region's producers.⁶⁶

Montgomery citizens reacted to the economic devastation wrought by the Panic by turning their anger upon the national political party they believed responsible for the crisis. Before 1840 the county's electorate had delivered a large majority of their votes to the Democratic presidential candidate.⁶⁷ In the presidential election of 1836, the Whig candidate obtained only twenty-nine and one half percent of the votes cast in the county. In 1840, the first election after the onset of the depression, the Whigs

⁶⁶ George W. Featherstonhaugh, Excursion through the Slave States (New York: 1844), 36. After leaving Christiansburg, the author met a coffle of "about three hundred slaves . . . who had bivouacked the preceeding night in chains in the woods" on the New River. According to Featherstonhaugh, the slaves were headed to Natchez, Mississippi, where they were to be sold to Louisiana sugar planters.

⁶⁷ Francis P. Gaines, "The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1850-1851" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Tennessee: 1950), 44. Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 824.

received over fifty-six percent of the total vote. Moreover, Montgomery voters provided Whig presidential candidates with majorities in each election from 1840 through 1852. The switch from Democratic to Whig support after 1836 suggests that because a Democrat was president at the start of the Panic, his party received the blame. Hence, the Panic of 1837 helped to create a Whig stronghold in Montgomery.

TABLE II

Montgomery's Votes for Presidential Candidates by Party,
1836-1852⁶⁸

	<u>1836</u>	<u>1840</u>	<u>1844</u>	<u>1848</u>	<u>1852</u>
Whig	163	338	364	342	501
Democrat	<u>389</u>	<u>261</u>	<u>345</u>	<u>306</u>	<u>490</u>
Total Votes	552	599	709	648	991
Percent Whig Votes	29.5	56.4	51.3	52.7	50.5

The county voter's support of the Whig party stemmed from the Whig's advocacy of federal support for economic development. The Whigs, and their perennial presidential candidate Henry Clay, forged and championed the American System, which called for internal improvements in each state to be financed in part through the sale of western

⁶⁸ Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 824. Since congressional representatives were elected by district, and not by county, it is impossible to ascertain whether Montgomery voters supported Democrats or Whigs in congressional races 1836-1852.

lands.⁶⁹ Montgomery stood to gain an annual appropriation of \$44,300 of the estimated \$728,194 that Virginia would receive each year through approval of the western lands bill.⁷⁰

Although the Panic and the American System attracted many county residents into the Whig fold, the state Whig organization deserved much of the credit for the party's success. The Whig party in Virginia closely associated itself with the issue of internal improvements. By espousing a construction program in its platform, and by portraying Democrats as being both responsible for the Panic and opposed to internal improvements, the Whigs appealed to the support of those western Virginians who desired economic development, but who found their economic aspirations thwarted by the Democratic state legislature.⁷¹

⁶⁹Henry H. Simms, The Rise of the Whigs in Virginia (Richmond: 1929), 40.

⁷⁰Lynchburg Daily Virginian, August 11, 1842. Secretary of the Treasury, Levi Woodbury, estimated Virginia's allotment of western land funds over the period 1832-1838 to be \$4,369,169 or \$728,194 each year. This represented an average of \$29 for each male citizen in the state who was over twenty-one years of age. Using population figures from the census of 1830, Montgomery stood to receive \$44,300 annually from land sales. Halifax County had the largest population and would gain \$100,920. The county with the lowest population, Warwick, was to receive only \$5,650. Montgomery's share of the land sale proceeds was about average for Southwest Virginia.

⁷¹Richmond Enquirer, July 22, 1845. An article penned by the "Mountain Democrat" argued that the Democrats of the Old Dominion were the true friends of internal improvements and not the Whigs.

Moreover, the Whigs discovered a hotbed of internal improvement support in Montgomery. Most of the county's residents farmed and naturally endorsed internal improvements which would provide easier access to eastern agricultural markets. Therefore, the county listened favorably to the Whig party's argument for improvement projects in the West. Indeed, large landowners like William Ballard and Robert L. Preston, and David Barnett, a former Democrat, led the Whig forces in Montgomery. Newspapers of the region indicate numerous Whig meetings in the county, attesting to the strength of the party in Montgomery.⁷²

Although national political parties appeared to offer some long range economic opportunities, the most immediate source of financial help remained the Commonwealth's efforts. Hence the leaders of Montgomery, connecting their prosperity with internal improvements and general economic growth, once again focused their primary efforts on Virginia's legislature. Frustrated by their limited success in the Convention of 1820-1830, low market prices for crops, and the lack of internal improvements in their section, Westerners pressed for a second constitutional gathering.

⁷²Lynchburg Daily Virginian, Nov. 10, 1851; Mss. Census Returns, for Montgomery County, 1850. William Ballard Preston a lawyer and farmer owned \$60,000 of property. Robert L. Preston recorded \$21,500 of real estate in 1850.

Westerners, as early as 1838, called for a constitutional convention to meliorate the ills left uncorrected in 1829. This western unrest continued to build during the depression years, until it peaked in 1842. Newspaper articles from the summer of that year reflect widespread western sentiment endorsing a western convention to discuss grievances. Thus, in August, 1842, delegates from the West gathered in Lewisburg to decide upon a plan of action.⁷³ Of the eighteen western counties that attended, only four, Montgomery, Augusta, Wythe, and Allegheny, came from the area that would remain with Virginia in 1863. The remainder of the delegates came from the portion of the state that would become West Virginia.⁷⁴

William Ballard Preston represented Montgomery at the Lewisburg Convention where he served as chairman of the Agenda Committee. In that capacity he drew up the proposals to be considered at the meeting. According to his committee, the convention's purpose was "to concert measures

⁷³Parkersburg Gazette, July 14, 1842; Lynchburg Daily Virginian, August 15, 1842. See various issues June-August 1842 of these papers.

⁷⁴Lynchburg Daily Virginian, August 15, 1842; Chandler, Representation in Virginia, 47, 50. The counties attending from the western reaches consisted of Harrison, Cabell, Ohio, Mercer, Kanawha, Logan, Greenbrier, Monroe, Fayette, Wood, Randolph, Jackson, Page, and Wayne.

for obtaining their just and equal share of representation in the State Legislature according to the white population."⁷⁵

Both the West and the Southwest attended the gathering with the same goals in mind, equal representation with the East in the General Assembly. They hoped that legislative equity would provide them with the means to achieve economic development. At the end of the convention the delegates petitioned the Assembly for a new constitutional convention. But since little sentiment for a convention existed in the East, the legislature refused to act.⁷⁶

As Westerners sought solutions to their economic plight, other sections of the state voiced different discontents.⁷⁷ Concern over the economic debacle of the post-1837 era brought into the western fold eastern allies who pushed for economic development of the isolated West.

⁷⁵Lynchburg Daily Virginian, August 15, 1842.

⁷⁶Ibid. An article on the convention comments that little attention was given to the Lewisburg Convention and that little sympathy for a constitutional convention existed in eastern Virginia.

⁷⁷Chandler, Representation in Virginia, 55. Discontented easterners desired a constitutional convention in order to institute political reforms. Such changes included the reform of county and state judiciary systems, the direct election of the governor, and the placing of specific limitations on the tax powers of the General Assembly. But the primary demand of many easterners was for an end to the freehold suffrage.

Increasingly, eastern Virginians, groping for a way out of their own economic problems, turned to developing the western reaches of the state as a solution to the stagnation blighting both sections.⁷⁸

Moreover, western leaders such as John Floyd of Montgomery long had been "in thorough sympathy with the local interests and demands . . . on the subject of internal improvements." Floyd believed that "the future greatness of the Commonwealth lay in her ability to render available her natural resources and to bind her inhabitants by ties of common interest."⁷⁹ As early as 1830, western leaders had advocated uniting and strengthening the state by development of the West and Southwest. But not until the late 1840's, when the eastern economy began to falter under the pressures of the depression, did easterners openly advocate western development as a means of lifting the entire state out of its depressed condition.

⁷⁸ Richmond Enquirer, July 22, 1845. While the Panic of 1837 crippled the infant economy of the West, that area still consisted primarily of a self sufficient system which could weather economic reversals. The eastern economy based upon staple crops and large amounts of slave labor could not tolerate such economic tailspins. Indeed, in 1845, the Enquirer noted that "the section below Tidewater, which was once populous is in many places almost deserted. The property and wealth are shifting to other divisions." The state of the eastern economy eventually led many large plantation owners to move from the state and seek a fresh start.

⁷⁹ Ambler, The Diary of John Floyd, 87-88.

Another reason for increased concern over western development was rooted in controversy over the slavery issue. For more than two decades, the debate over slavery had developed with increasing intensity across the nation. In the late 1840's, after the conquest of Mexico, the Northern states feared a concerted Southern effort to expand the limits of American slave territory. At times sectional conflict appeared imminent. In the late forties, eastern Virginians began to fear that should such a sectional split occur, Westerners would side with the North since the state legislature had repeatedly refused to respond to western demands for equal representation and internal improvements. Thus, by the late forties, eastern leaders began to express a more compromising and conciliatory attitude in their dealings with the West.⁸⁰

Under strong pressure from both easterners and westerners, the General Assembly finally sanctioned a statewide referendum on the issue of a constitutional convention. The referendum, held in 1849, won a sixty-four percent majority in Montgomery. More persons voted in this referendum than in the presidential election of 1848, indicating a strong interest in the issue. In the remainder of the

⁸⁰ Ambler, Sectionalism in Virginia, 311-19; Goodrich, "The Virginia System of Mixed Enterprise," 385.

state the convention succeeded by more than a two to one margin.⁸¹

The convention met in Richmond in October, 1850.⁸² Although fundamentally motivated by economic concerns, the convention's first issues and those most easily agreed upon consisted of state and local reforms.⁸³ But the primary business before the delegates remained the same as in 1829-- the expansion of democracy throughout the Old Dominion. After weeks of discussion, the convention decided to endorse universal white manhood suffrage. Actively supported by

⁸¹Burnham, Presidential Ballots, 824; Gaines, "The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1850-1851," 93, 298. Montgomery cast 430 of a total of 674 ballots in favor of the referendum. One year earlier, only 648 persons had voted in the presidential campaign of 1848. In the state at large 46,327 of 66,995 votes favored a convention.

⁸²Gaines, "The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1850-1851," 304-05; Pendleton, The Political History of Appalachian Virginia, 197, Mss. Census of 1850. Montgomery's delegate to the convention was Daniel Hoge a thirty-nine year old lawyer of sound finances. He owed \$12,600 worth of property in 1850 including thirty-three slaves. At the convention Hoge was placed upon the judiciary committee. Montgomery was a member of district thirty-four. Also representing that district were Samuel McCanast of Grayson and Benjamin Wyson of Pulaski. They also represented Floyd and Carroll.

⁸³Gaines, "The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1850-1851," 252- 53. Reforms passed by the convention included extending the governor's term from three to four years, providing for the direct election of the governor, and the abolishing of the executive council. Other changes permitted judges as well as justices of the peace to be popularly elected.

yeomen of the West and landless easterners who formerly had been subjected to the legislative domination of eastern planters and merchants, universal white manhood suffrage promised at last to become a reality.⁸⁴

After settling the suffrage issue, the delegates turned to the sticky problem of representation. Discussions centered around an appropriate basis for reapportionment. An agreement acceptable to the westerners became law under the revisions of 1850, replacing the relatively insignificant compromise obtained in 1829. The settlement provided for the election of House of Delegate members based upon the white system, thus excluding the counting of slaves as persons. Under this portion of the compromise the West gained twenty-seven delegates to give them a majority of fifteen. Eastern members of the convention favored the portion of the compromise which established the total number of senators at ninety-nine. Of that number, sixty-nine eastern and thirty western senators sat in the Senate. According to the compromise the number of senators became

⁸⁴George M. McFarland, "The Extention of Democracy in Virginia, 1850-1895" (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Princeton: 1934; hereinafter cited as McFarland, "Democracy in Virginia"), 15; Gaines, "The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1850-1851," 42-47.

set at a specific number rather than being allocated on a proportionate basis.⁸⁵

As a result of the Constitutional Convention of 1850, the West, inhabited by fifty-five percent of Virginia's white population, held fifty-one percent of the total number of state legislators. These figures represented an increase of ten percentage points in the number of western representatives.⁸⁶ Now, for the first time in their history, the Virginians west of the Blue Ridge had secured representation in the General Assembly which closely approximated their share of the population.

Montgomery voters, recognizing that the new constitution provided substantial gains in representation gave it overwhelming support. County residents cast ninety-eight percent of their votes in favor of the revised document and the other localities of the Southwest also approved the constitution by large majorities.⁸⁷ Statewide, a rather meager turnout at the polls favored the document by more

⁸⁵Chandler, Representation in Virginia, 69-70; Gaines, "The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1850-1851," 224-27. The discussions over reapportionment lasted six months. As a result of the reapportionment under the constitution the West held 103 total seats while the East held 99 in the legislature. Thus the West held a majority of five seats.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid., 308. The Montgomery voters cast 566 of 578 ballots in favor of the new constitution.

than seven to one. State newspapers explained the light voter turnout by stating that "everyone knew that the new constitution would easily pass." And in the words of one news editor, "The new constitution was the most popular candidate ever before the people of Virginia."⁸⁸

Southwestern Virginians immediately began to use their newly augmented influence to pursue their greatest interest. The first legislature elected under the 1850 Constitution quickly moved to revive and expand programs for internal improvements. Among the construction projects, railroads received the greatest amount of support from the new Assembly.

Montgomery's leaders realized that railroads were the transportation of the future and that rail transportation held the greater promise for economic development than other types of internal improvements. The ineffectiveness of canals and turnpikes in combating the effects of the Panic of 1837 had dismayed citizens who yearned for some solution to the county's isolation. Indeed, two turnpikes traversed Montgomery during this period. In 1838, the Salem and Pepper's Turnpike had opened, and in 1847 the Allegheny Turnpike had become a part of the larger Southwestern Turnpike. But the depressed state of the economy

⁸⁸Richmond Enquirer, Nov. 10, 1851.

resulting from the Panic pushed these endeavors to the verge of bankruptcy. Moreover, fund shortages limited upkeep and combined with wet weather conditions to render these roads virtually impassable. Such circumstances led one traveller to comment that while riding upon the Southwestern Turnpike they often "ran the danger of breaking our arms and legs together with our coach. We often had to get out frequently and walk a mile in the darkness; while the wagon was driven."⁸⁹

Westerners knew that they needed a continuous system of transportation to link them with the East. As the improvements of the Panic era in Montgomery proved, small scale projects did not handle sufficient freight and passenger travel eastward to break the area's seclusion. Therefore, after acquiring their new legislative power, county citizens, searching for quicker and cheaper links to eastern markets, instructed their representatives to

⁸⁹William McCauley, The History of Roanoke County, Virginia (Chicago: 1902), 269-70; Wood, "Allegheny Turnpike," 41-49; Klaus Wust, ed., "Travel Diary of the Immigrants from Baltimore to Southwest Virginia in 1852," Wythe County Historical Review (Jan. 1974), no. 6, 31-39.

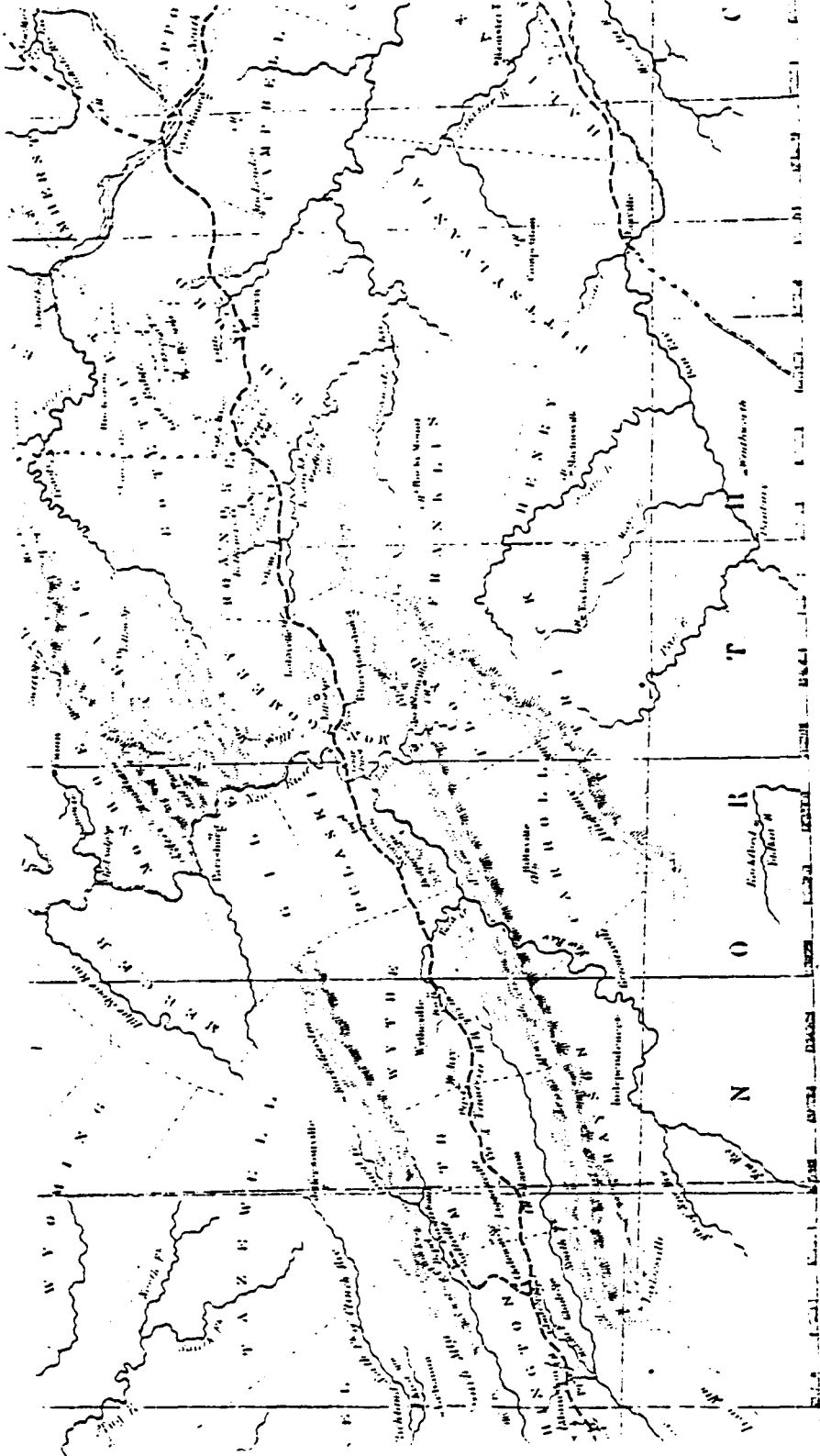
emphasize railroads rather than roads and canals, as the most important part of the state's internal improvement program.⁹⁰

Increased western representation in the General Assembly accounted for vastly increased funding for internal improvements. Indeed, the amount of money spent on such projects in 1849, increased six-fold by late 1851. A large portion of these state expenditures aided western railroad construction.⁹¹ The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad in particular received liberal state support. This railroad, originally named the Lynchburg and Tennessee, had been incorporated as early as March, 1845, but the state legislature refused to support it with funds until March, 1849. By this time westerners viewed passage of the "railroad bill" as an attempt to lessen sentiment for the constitutional referendum of 1849.⁹²

⁹⁰McFarland, "The Extention of Democracy in Virginia," 9; David Barnett to Edward Hammett, Dec. 29, 1848; Feb. 14, 1849, J. Hoge Tyler Papers, V.P.I. and S.U., Blacksburg, Virginia. Barnett, a delegate to the General Assembly from Montgomery, writes in his correspondance of his anxiousness over the outcome of the Lynchburg and Tennessee railroad bill (later Virginia and Tennessee).

⁹¹Goodrich, "The Virginia System of Mixed Enterprise," 366-67. In 1849, \$397,072 was spent on state internal improvement programs. Two years later the figure increased to \$2,429,179. Expenses on internal improvements peaked in 1854 at \$4,287,077 but dipped to \$1,729,409 in 1855.

⁹²Annual Report of the Railroad Companies, 427; Richmond Whig, March 20, 1849.



MAP IV: THE VIRGINIA AND TENNESSEE RAILROAD OF SOUTHWESTERN VIRGINIA IN 1857⁹³

⁹³Annual Report of the Railroad Companies of the State of Virginia made to the Board of Public Works for the Year Ending September 30, 1852 (Richmond, 1858; hereinafter cited as Annual Reports of the Railroad Companies), 1.

Construction upon the Virginia and Tennessee, which ran from Lynchburg to Bristol, began in late 1850 and continued until 1857. By 1852 the railroad had crossed Montgomery. Passing through both Christiansburg and Ingle's Ferry,⁹⁴ the railroad's route closely paralleled the Old Wilderness Trail which lay just south of the county's center.⁹⁵

A number of county residents held prominent positions in the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Company. These persons all had agricultural interests in Montgomery which the railroad greatly enhanced. Therefore many county leaders looked upon the railroad as a means of achieving economic gain for themselves as well as the county.⁹⁶

⁹⁴The Virginia and Tennessee Railroad," 1853 (note-book), Norfleet collection, VSL; Wust, "Travel Diary of the Immigrants," 1-9. In 1852 the railroad ran from Lynchburg to Newburn, Pulaski County. Ingle's Ferry is now Radford.

⁹⁵Lynchburg Daily Virginian, October 27, 30, 1851. Many of the railroad supporters gathered at a Virginia and Tennessee convention in Abingdon in October, 1851. William Ballard Preston served on the "Committee of the Address" and Daniel Trigg upon the "Central Committee on Subscriptions." David Barnett, the county's representative to the House of Delegates, held a seat on the "Montgomery Subscription Committee," where he sold railroad stock.

⁹⁶Receipts, David Barnett to Edward Hammett, Dec. 6, 1850, Feb. 3, Sept. 6, 1851, J. Hoge Tyler Papers, V.P.I. and S.U., Blacksburg, VA. Barnett sold several shares in the Virginia and Tennessee to Hammett at \$25 per share. Hammett later became the stationmaster at the Central (Radford) Depot. Other members of the subscription committee were Robert L. Preston, James Edmundson, John Radford, and Jacob Kent.

The support exhibited by Montgomery's inhabitants for the railroad did not go unrewarded. Soon after its appearance, the Virginia and Tennessee seemed well on its way to helping to expand the county's economy. The access which the railroad provided to eastern agricultural markets supplied the most tangible benefits to the county. By 1857, rail links extended as far west as Bristol and as far east as Lynchburg, Petersburg, and Norfolk. Richmond could be reached by transferring goods from the railroad to the Kanawha Canal in Lynchburg. For the first time in its history the county possessed the economic ties to eastern markets for which it had struggled so long and so hard.⁹⁷

Immediately after the construction of the railroad through Montgomery, agricultural production began to expand. Between 1850 and 1860 wheat output increased by 128 percent, from 51,827 to 118,271 bushels. Potato production in the decade grew from 8,865 to 18,869 due to the Virginia and Tennessee. From 1850 to 1860 the output of milk products in the county increased by over 10,000

⁹⁷Crush, Montgomery County Story, 62.

pounds. Tobacco production boomed.⁹⁸ In 1850, county tobacco growers raised only 46,100 pounds of the leaf crop. But by 1860, that figure had increased to 727,995 pounds. This expansion represented a growth of over 1,479 percent. Although Montgomery farmers still produced inferior crops of tobacco due to the short growing season and poor soil conditions, the railroad reduced freight expenses so drastically that by the mid 1850's tobacco had become the county's most profitable crop.⁹⁹ Indeed, its production became so extensive in the Southwest that tobacco buyers in Big Lick (now Roanoke) constructed warehouses, stables, and sheds, to house large volumes of the crop.¹⁰⁰

As a result of the post 1850 agricultural rebirth in Montgomery, the small supply of local white labor quickly

⁹⁸U. S. Bureau of the Census, Agriculture in the United States in 1860, II, 158-61; McFarland, "Democracy in Virginia," 170; U. S. Bureau of the Census, A Statistical View of the United States: 1850, 276-82. Corn production between 1850 and 1860 declined from 266,616 to 256,735 bushels. This decline probably came as a result of high tobacco prices which caused the leaf crop to supplant corn as the most planted crop.

⁹⁹U. S. Bureau of the Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1860, 158-61; U. S. Bureau of the Census, A Statistical View of the United States: 1850, 276-82; Charles W. Turner, "Railroad Service to Virginia Farmers, 1828-1860," Agricultural History (1948), XXII, 241, 247. Due to rail transportation, produce which had cost \$224 to transport overland was reduced to \$67, a decrease of 70%.

¹⁰⁰McCauley, The History of Roanoke County, Virginia, 152.

evaporated.¹⁰¹ Therefore it became necessary to rely more heavily than ever upon slave labor to fill the void.

Although the number of slaves had grown before 1830, their numbers decreased slightly in the late thirties and forties as a consequence of the creation of new counties and the Panic of 1837.¹⁰² Between 1850 and 1860, however, although portions of the county were annexed, the slave population still grew by almost fifty-one percent. Moreover, the proportion of slaves in the total population increased from seventeen and one-half percent in 1850 to twenty-one percent in 1860.¹⁰³ The increased slave population reflected the great agricultural expansion in the county because most of these slaves acted as farm workers.

Although the railroad boosted Montgomery's agriculture it also stimulated other sections of the economy. County residents quickly recognized the Virginia and Tennessee as a profitable method of coal transportation. As early as

¹⁰¹McFarland, "Democracy in Virginia," 11.

¹⁰²Brown, Montgomery County Legislative History, 3. In 1841 a small portion of Pulaski was annexed to Montgomery. In 1852 Craig was given a small part of the county. Both changes were of minor importance.

¹⁰³U. S. Bureau of the Census, A Compendium of the Enumeration of the Inhabitants and Statistics of the United States: 1840, 36-38; U. S. Bureau of the Census, A Statistical View of the United States: 1850, 257-58; U. S. Bureau of the Census, The Population of the United States in 1860, 502-18.

1750 coal had been discovered in the county, but until the railroad came no practical way of transporting the mineral to eastern markets existed. Thus when the railroad passed through the county, the citizens promptly petitioned the General Assembly to build a short link from the coal mines to the railroad's trunk line.¹⁰⁴

Almost immediately after the completion of the connecting line from the Price's Mountain mines to the Virginia and Tennessee, the coal industry in the county began to grow. By 1860, Montgomery's single mine produced over \$11,200 worth of coal and had a total capital investment of over \$20,000. By the Civil War, coal was second to agriculture as the county's chief economic asset.¹⁰⁵

Besides promoting both agriculture and coal mining, the railroad stimulated other aspects of the Montgomery economy. As profits mounted from these endeavors, other pursuits involving great amounts of capital and employing more persons emerged in response to the needs of the county's expanding economy. By 1860, the Montgomery economy supported smiths, leather workers, painters, photographers, lumber

¹⁰⁴Quinn W. Stuart, "The Price Mountain Coal Field of Virginia" (B.A. Thesis, V.P.I.: 1911), 5; Price Mountain Coal Mine Company, "Virginia Legislative Petitions," February 21, 1853, VSL; Thirty-ninth Annual Report of the Board of Public Works to the General Assembly of Virginia: 1853-1854, 586-89.

¹⁰⁵U. S. Bureau of the Census, Manufactures in the United States in 1860, I, 622-23.

jacks, coopers, carriage makers, carpenters, and millers among others. In that same year thirty-three carpenters performed services valued at over \$28,000. Fourteen blacksmiths labored at a value of \$8,215, while the county's three lumber companies supplied \$8,300 worth of wood products.¹⁰⁶ The railroad even boosted the tourist trade since it provided travellers with better access to the county's health spas.¹⁰⁷

TABLE III

Ten top Montgomery Manufactures in 1860,
ranked according to the value of products made.¹⁰⁸

<u>Manufacture</u>	<u>No. of busi- nesses</u>	<u>Capital</u>	<u>Cost Raw Mat.</u>	<u>No. Employed</u>	<u>Product Value</u>
Flour/milling	3	12,000	24,750	4	28,060
Carpentry	3	2,300	11,800	33	28,000
Liquor	3	12,660	12,120	9	17,000
Leather Goods	3	4,000	7,485	7	11,700
Coal	1	20,000	775	12	11,200
Painting	1	600	4,700	8	10,000
Lumber	3	2,775	1,870	11	8,300
Smithing	9	1,210	2,396	14	8,215
Furniture	2	14,000	1,275	4	4,705
Tin/Copper/Iron	2	925	2,610	3	4,375

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷A Description of the Album of Virginia (Richmond: 1857), 14, 21. The railroad was a great boost to tourism in Montgomery. While the county's health spas suffered before 1850 due to poor roads, they prospered during the great decade, 1850-1860. References in advertisements always noted the easy access provided by the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad to the spas such as the Montgomery White and Yellow Sulphur Springs.

¹⁰⁸U. S. Bureau of the Census, Manufactures in the United States in 1860, I, 622-23.

These new pursuits helped to shore up Montgomery's economy, the strength of which was reflected by the ratio of the county's imports to exports. In the period from October to June, during the years 1855, 1857, and 1858, the two Montgomery railroad depots located at Christiansburg and Ingle's Ferry, shipped over 6,641 tons of goods eastward. This figure included leather, lumber, and mine goods as well as agricultural products. Moreover, during the same period, these stations received only 4,100 tons of goods. Thus the county possessed a very favorable balance of trade since it exported 2,541 tons more in these three years than it imported.¹⁰⁹ Before the advent of the railroad there existed hardly any exchange of goods with the East. In one decade, the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad had transformed the Montgomery economy.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹Annual Reports of the Railroad Companies: 1857, 86-88; Annual Reports of the Railroad Companies: 1858, 112-15; Thirty-ninth Annual Report of the Board of Public Works: 1855, 788-90.

¹¹⁰Crush, Montgomery County Story, 62.

TABLE IV
Freight Shipments to and from Montgomery County
Railroad Depots, 1855-1858¹¹¹

	<u>Freight Sent</u>	<u>Freight Received</u>	<u>Net Exported</u>
1855	2,319.5	1,404.5	915
1857	2,026	1,270	756
1858	<u>2,296</u>	<u>1,426</u>	<u>870</u>
TOTALS	6,641.5	4,100.5	2,541

As a result of the increased profitability of agriculture and new incentives to manufacturing and mining the price of land in Montgomery soared. The value of land had increased only slightly between 1820 and 1850; but in a single decade, 1850 to 1860, the price per acre grew from \$5.84 to \$91.30, an increase of 1463 percent.¹¹² The phenomenal rise in land values in this decade is another good indication of the economic strides enjoyed by the county in this prosperous period.

Since the early 1800's the county had been engaged in a regional and political confrontation with the more

¹¹¹Annual Reports of the Railroad Companies: 1857, 86-88; Annual Reports of the Railroad Companies: 1858, 112-15; Thirty-ninth Annual Report of the Board of Public Works: 1855, 788-90.

¹¹²McFarland, "Democracy in Virginia," 170-71, 175. In 1820 land in Montgomery averaged \$2.26 per acre. This figure rose gradually to \$3.17 in 1840, \$5.84 in 1850, and soared to \$91.30 by 1860.

powerful East. But in the late 1840's easterners finally began to understand the strategic importance of state unity and used compromise to quell western unrest. The compromise gave the west a majority voice in state affairs and within five years that region began to flower economically.

But for many transmontane counties, the concessions came too late. Montgomery's history in the antebellum period suggests that political and social cohesion and unity depended upon forging economic links among the far-flung sections of the state. While the Southwest possessed significant internal improvements by 1860, and thus had experienced some economic expansion, the area which later became West Virginia had virtually none. For instance, the internal improvements that aided Montgomery had such a profound effect on the county's economy that slaves were needed to handle the additional labor requirements. Moreover, the development of slavery in the Southwest tended to separate that region even further apart from what would become West Virginia. Therefore, when the Civil War erupted in 1861, the Southwest found that it held more in common with the eastern half of the state than with the Northern part of the United States. On the other hand, West Virginians still resented the East and shared few common bonds with it. Montgomery's

leadership had helped to obtain prosperity, but that prosperity also entitled it to the same post war legacy suffered by the East.

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH, 1776-1860

by

Alvin Morris Shelton, III

(ABSTRACT)

The Blue Ridge Mountains separated Montgomery County, Virginia from the state's eastern agricultural markets. This mountain barrier restricted the transportation of crops and therefore limited farm products to subsistence crops and easily transported livestock. Only after the construction of the Allegheny Turnpike in 1809, and the Roanoke Canal in 1815, which together provided outlets to formerly inaccessible markets, did Montgomery's infant economy begin to emerge. Still, the county's economy could not supply enough capital to finance further internal improvements. Therefore the citizens of Montgomery appealed to the General Assembly for internal improvements. But within the existing system of representation, the state's western reaches were underrepresented.

In part then, Montgomery's struggle for economic prosperity was a political struggle where the Westerners, desirous of increased representation sided against the overrepresented Easterners. After almost fifty years of political agitation by the West, that region finally obtained concessions from the Easterners which approximated its equal share

of legislative power. Almost immediately Western representatives pushed measures through the General Assembly providing for an increased number of internal improvements for the West.

Among the internal construction projects that aided the Transmontane was the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad. This railroad, extending from Bristol to Lynchburg, became an important stimulant for the undeveloped Montgomery economy. Rail transportation provided cheap, quick access to eastern agricultural markets. This facilitated the use of large-scale farm production in Montgomery. Moreover, rail transportation generated other non-agricultural industries such as coal and lumber.

Montgomery's struggle for economic development paid off in the decade 1850-1860. This prosperous period came as a result of the internal improvements which Westerners had begged for since early in the nineteenth century. During this successful period the economic ties established with the East by Montgomery helped to mold the county's decision to secede from the Union in 1861, while the counties further west shared no such common bonds and did not join the Confederacy.