

CONIUNCTA



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Editor's Note



After a semester of planning and development, alongside schoolwork and Thursday evening debates, I am very proud to present the first issue of *Coniuncta*. The journal is founded on the belief that undergraduate research, however iterative, is valuable. We seek to highlight undergraduate research from diverse disciplines and promote discourse across different fields. Our inaugural edition includes articles taking very disparate looks at the intersection between economics, history, and politics in 19th-century America, alongside an analysis of realism and modernism with an accessible introduction to Marxist literary criticism. We believe that the interaction between fields like philosophy and philology is vital for scholarship, and the inaugural edition of *Coniuncta* accomplishes this goal. I look forward to future issues encompassing different beliefs and presenting the myriad scholarship produced by undergraduates. The motto of the Washington Literary Society and Debating Union succinctly summarizes the philosophy behind the foundation of our journal: *quam fluctus diversi, quam mare coniuncti*. Although the waves are many, the sea is one.

Reese Fulgenzi, Spring 2018

Staff, Spring 2018

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From Backwater to Superpower: The Transformation of the American Economy, 1800-1850

John Connor, CLAS 2021

Introduction

Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, the once insignificant and predominantly rural U.S. economy was transformed into a uniquely American financial powerhouse by three main factors – managers, corporations, and railroads. Each one of these factors was driven by a broader economic revolution. The rise of the managers was propelled by the technological revolution; the rise of the corporation was driven by the distribution revolution; the rise of the railroads was made possible by the managerial or organizational revolution – in the phrase of historian Alfred Chandler, the “Visible Hand”.¹

Managers and Technology

The Technological Revolution

The Technological Revolution refers to the dramatic evolution of manufacturing technology in early nineteenth century America, enabling the development of the industrial revolution. The technological revolution grew partly from an increasingly positive state attitude towards manufacturing. Between 1790 and 1830, three Secretaries of the Treasury – Alexander Hamilton, Albert Gallatin, and

Louis McLane – produced a series of reporters describing America’s abysmal lack of manufacturing. Hamilton suggested subsidies and tariffs to encourage manufacturing growth; McLane expanded on economic conditions in greater detail. Subsequently, Henry Clay’s “American System” of tariffs and public works projects would encourage the growth of manufacturing projects – especially in the west. Laws on behalf on debtors and risk takers, in addition to the creation of limited liability, further encouraged investors to support manufacturing businesses.

Such state encouragement of manufacturing was key in spurring the technological innovations of Eli Whitney, which formed a significant part of the Technological Revolution. Whitney lacked both fixed capital, money for buildings tools and other necessities, and working capital, money to pay rent, debts and other obligations, but was able to succeed due to his reliance on government contracts, which eliminated worries over wages. Whitney is an excellent example of the state’s role in providing capital, in an age when most risk takers lacked the funds to become entrepreneurs.

Whitney made two major contributions to the Technological Revolution: The Uniformity Principle and the substitution of machines for labor.

¹ Alfred Chandler, *The Visible Hand*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977. Page 12.

The first of these, the Uniformity Principle, is arguably the key of the technological revolution. Traditionally, crafts like the muskets Whitney contracted to produce for the government were made by single craftsmen, who assembled each item solo. No two muskets were alike. Under the Uniformity Principle, this process was reversed – Whitney began with one model and conformed all the parts to it, allowing for quick repairs and mass production by workers who made only one part of a particular firearm, allowing for the interchangeable parts to be reassembled later into identical models (it should be noted that Whitney never achieved this goal in practice, borrowing many of his ideas from the French military officer Honore Blanc). The Uniformity Principle allowed for increased efficiency and large scale manufacturing production – vastly boosting American business.²

Whitney's second innovation, the substitution of machinery for labor, is somewhat more complex. Firstly, Whitney himself never actually designed such machinery – he merely made smaller parts for such machinery that workers could easily copy. Secondly, Whitney was responding not to the scarcity of labor in general, but rather to the scarcity of skilled labor. Nevertheless, Whitney's innovations made possible both the massive cotton boom in the south and the emergence of textile manufacturing in the north – where the technological revolution would make possible the emergence of managers.

² Meritt Roe Smith, 'Eli Whitney and the American System of Manufactures,' in C. W. Pursell, Jr. (ed.), *Technology in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), p. 54



Managers

During the 1830's, the emergent New England textile industry – centered in the manufacturing hubs of Lowell and Manchester - witnessed the introduction of managers, a key step toward the modern business hierarchy and the transformation to a modern economy. Innovative technology helped in the construction of textile mills employing thousands of workers – most single young women or recent immigrants – in large scale operations that required the hiring of numerous mid-level supervisors.

From the textile industry, the refinement of the managerial system spread into the realm of firearms production – first through the efforts of Samuel Colt, and then through the rise of the Springfield Armory. Initially, Springfield possessed a bizarre system of management involving two parallel

executives- the superintendent of arms and the paymaster – whose equal authority and overlapping roles led to constant conflict.

However, the 1815 appointment of Roswell Lee as superintendent led to a resolution of these early conflicts. Lee pioneered two strategies to increase Springfield's efficiency. First, he subordinated the role of the paymaster, streamlining the managerial chain of command. Second, he introduced the practice of "inside contracting" – relying on subcontractors for a workforce instead of hiring workers directly.

Drawing on Whitney's work in Uniformity and the availability of new technology, Springfield would soon become a leading example of the success of managers in American business, bringing the economy closer to modern models of administration. But the introduction of managers was indeed only a part of a separate trend in American economics – the Distribution Revolution and the rise of corporations.

Corporations and Distribution

The Distribution Revolution

The Distribution Revolution consisted of the increasing efficiency of goods distribution in America - increasing the interconnectedness of regional economies. It begins with the advent of increased specialization among merchants – a conservative response to the proliferation of goods, rather than an innovative change. Specialization was made possible by two factors: the spread of machines, which increased productivity, and an increase in market size, which allowed for greater specialization according to Smith's division of labor principle.

Such specializations resulted in changes on all levels of the merchant world: among middlemen, factors or brokers who distributed goods to the interior; commissioner merchants, part time brokers who also bought and sold on their own; and wholesale jobbers, who focused entirely on the buying and reselling of goods. Change resulting from specialization took two predominant forms: the increasing independence of middlemen from merchants, and the elimination of the wholesale jobber.

The first change, the growing independence of middlemen, is largely attributable to the Principal-Agent Problem – the necessity of merchants either trusting or closely monitoring their middleman contractors, a process increasingly difficult due to westward expansion and distance between merchants and their subcontractors. Moreover, many merchants wished to discontinue their reliance on middlemen out of a desire to narrow their obligations – a result of increased specialization. The second change, the end of the wholesale jobber, is attributable to a variety of factors. While the immediate cause was the arrival of the railway supply industry, deeper forces were at work in the jobber's disappearance from economic life. Concentrated markets for products made wholesaling increasingly difficult, while the development of company purchase departments supplanted the need for the jobber's role. Improved transportation allowed companies to sell directly to businesses, eliminating the need for the jobber as middleman. While jobbers survived in certain non-manufacturing sectors of the economy – for example, the flour industry – the majority were subsumed

into manufacturing companies or employed in purchasing departments.

The reliability and rapidity of railroad transportation – and increased communication with the advent of the telegraph – helped to cut transaction costs and boost business

Replacing the jobbers were railroads and mail order firms, the center of the Distribution Revolution. Railroads – the development and full impact of which are discussed separately in this paper – allowed for direct distribution of goods from merchants to customers, reducing transaction costs through increased stock turnover and giving rise to mail order firms like Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck. The reliability and rapidity of railroad transportation – and increased communication with the advent of the telegraph – helped to cut transaction costs and boost business in a phenomenon described by Alfred Chandler as “The Economy of Speed.” Yet Adam Smith’s “Economy of Scale” – the potential for businesses to expand within the framework of a larger economy – was also a key factor.

The increased efficiency of distribution in turn boosted the retail world – especially after Alexander Turney Stewart developed the methods of the modern department store. As the proprietor of New York City’s Marble Palace, Stewart introduced such

innovations as a free entrance policy, sales discounts, buying with cash, departmentalization, and a centrally organized force of salesmen.³

From specialization to the end of middlemen to the rise of retail, the Distribution Revolution transformed the early nineteenth century U.S. economy, paving the way for a more important specific development – the emergence of corporations

Corporations

In the year 1800, capital was dispersed and few banks existed. Investors wishing to build small canals and turnpikes while spreading investment risk created local corporations, while those interested in large scale projects like the Erie Canal engaged in public private partnership, facilitated by state bonds.⁴

The increased popularity of the corporation resulted in changes in the legal system designed to make the corporative model more viable. The first significant legal change involved the establishment of limited liability to spread risk, encourage investment, and protect property owners; this measure to protect investor rights is sometimes seen as a product of Jacksonianism. The second change involved the shift from the Associational to the Fictional definition of a corporation in law.

³ H. E. Resseguie, ‘Alexander Turney Stewart and the Development of the Department Store, 1823-1876,’ *Business History Review*, 89 (1965): 307-316.

⁴ Thomas C. Cochran, ‘The Business Revolution,’ *American Historical Review*, LXXIX, (1974): 15.

Under the Associational definition, a corporation was a mere group of investors; under the Fictional definition, it became a legal person, with rights and privileges, the ability to sue and be sued, and other empowering measures. The third change involved Justice John Marshall's decision in *Dartmouth v. Woodward*, which prevented states from rewriting the contracts of corporations – a crucial bulwark against state interference with commerce.⁵ The decision was subsequently reinforced and applied to for profit businesses in *Providence Bank v. Billings*.⁶

As the banking sector developed (particularly in New England) private capital was increasingly able to replace public assistance in the development of corporations; moreover, as conditions allowed essentially free entry into banking, the American economy experienced a proliferation of banks, saving markets from monopoly. Banking was essentially to corporate development.⁷ By the time of the civil war – as falling wages encouraged merchants to invest capital – bankers like Jay Cooke were becoming essential to the Union cause through the distribution of government bonds; not since Nicholas

Biddle had banks played such a role in the economy.⁸

The development of the corporation – combined with the introduction of managers as a result of the Technological Revolution – allowed for the last and most dynamic change in the early 19th century economy – the Managerial Revolution and its byproduct, the American railroad.

Railroads and Organization

The Managerial Revolution and Railroads

The first major step toward modern business organization involved Benjamin Latrobe's organizational reforms in financial accounting and operational precision at the B & O railroad, which set a precedent – or “path dependence” - for later businesses by improving operational maintenance. Latrobe was followed by Daniel McCallum of the New York and Erie Railroad, the father of divisionalization. McCallum divided his corporation into smaller regional departments, improving efficiency in a business known for massive transportation costs⁹. Lastly, Edgar Thomson and the Pennsylvania Railroad established the line and staff principle – the concept of multiple chains of command based on department, rather than one single, unwieldy hierarchy from top to bottom.¹⁰

Cornelius Vanderbilt's New York Central Railroad nearly added another principle to

⁵ James Willard Hurst, *Law and the Conditions of Freedom*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956.

⁶ Herbert Hovenkamp, *Enterprise and Law in America, 1836-1937*. (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), p 20.

⁷ Naomi Lamoreaux, 'Banks, kinship, and economic development: the New England case,' *Journal of Economic History*, 56 (1986): 667.

⁸ Henrietta Larson, *Jay Cooke: Private Banker* (Cambridge, Mass., 1936), p.151.

⁹A. D. Chandler, Jr., *The Railroads: The Nation's First Big Business* (New York, 1981), p 101.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

these ideas through its combination of small, efficient local railroads into a larger corporation. Many believed that this tactic would ultimately help Vanderbilt surpass the B&O, but the New York Central Railroad's failure to adapt divisionalization or line and staff theories ultimately negated this goal.

By spreading these principles of the Managerial Revolution, railroads acted as a change agent in American markets.

Conclusion

Between 1800 and 1850, railways, corporations, and managers acted as conduits for the Managerial, Distribution, and Technological Revolutions. Economic activity shifted to a primarily urban focus; individual merchants were replaced with organized firms; and artisanal production gave way to machines. By the mid nineteenth century, America abandoned its traditional, European style economy of farms and merchants to develop a new, uniquely American system.



On the “In-Between”: Realism and Modernism

Joseph French, CLAS 2019

From its roots in 19th century France to the present, realism has been defined as an art movement both historical and aesthetic in character. The aesthetic ideas it deals with are colored by other major movements in art— especially modernism. This blending results in works neither purely realist nor modernist, from Woolf’s modernist works profoundly shaped by realism to today’s realist conventions in television and movies. Realism should not fully shake its historical roots because, even though its historical period is over, its influence on aesthetics in other art forms persists. Because of the difficulties in arguing this position for all forms of art, I will be focusing on novels as represented by Woolf, a modernist. These sorts of written works, for their inability to be classified correctly as realist or otherwise, are an “in-between”.

Realism has traditionally been defined as the counter to idealism in its overall statement of art’s purpose. The movement often claims to be a mirror that objectively reflects what it is representing, and “examines in as much depth as possible the reality behind appearance and does not represent it abstractly” (Lukacs 77). Early on however, artists went far in intentionally depicting the working class in a grittier, more ‘authentic’ light somehow more true than the idealized view;, often performing laborious tasks or in undignified situations. By only showing this limited side of reality, realists are not telling the truth, but simply telling a different lie to that of the idealists. These works of fiction

not only champion their ability to know reality in a broad sense, but in detail fine enough to recreate it perfectly. Realists, not realism, used the aesthetics in their own personal situations to depict the very opposite of the ideal life. This is not the life which many of us live; this is not the in-between.

With time, this opposition faded, and artists were able to adapt the aesthetic qualities of realism for their own use without indulging the itch to paint only the unsightly. Woolf, for example, is able to take some of the key lessons of realism, including its use of ‘types’ and its mission to mirror the ‘real’ world, and use them in her own writing to offer physical reminders of the places her characters are in. In his classic study, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, the philologist Erich Auerbach uses the example of wallpaper in *To the Lighthouse*, which draws Mrs. Ramsay out on an internal tangent from the state of the house, to the maid, to people passing by the window. This is a kind of abstraction on mental processing, where although not rooted in immediate reality (our surroundings, the people in the current room), Mrs. Ramsay is able to have an internal journey. In fact, Woolf and Georg Lukacs, Marxist literary critic and author of ‘Marx and Engels on Aesthetics,’ agree on quite a bit, and modern writers have noticed “the perhaps surprising similarity between Lukacs’ criticism of post-Flaubertian novels as either too enclosed in subjectivity or too

factualist and Woolf's critique of modern fiction as being either too 'spiritualist' or too 'materialist'" (Morris 149). The mirror that Woolf puts up in front of the readers is that of their own subjectivity. For a moment in *To the Lighthouse*, Mrs. Ramsay is inspecting her son's shoes when her mind wanders, "But it was the door that annoyed her; every door was left open. She listened. The drawing room door was open; the hall door was open; it sounded as if the bedroom doors were opened..." (Auerbach 526). By presenting the mind as it really works, calling upon objects in the room and the far-off things those objects remind us of, and so forth, Woolf is able to present an accurate depiction of a person thinking. Woolf accomplishes this by doing away with the burden of depicting the real as exclusively far from ideal, which leaves her in-between.



On subjectivity and totality, Woolf and Lukacs are also in agreement. Lukacs posits that "real art thus represents life in its totality, in motion, development, and evolution" (Lukacs 77). The motion realism has presented in the past is that of

chronology—the narrator, situated in the present, is able to think about the past and dream about the future, but the lines between time frames are rigid; they never collide in the way real-life thoughts do. Auerbach notices how Woolf treats the progression of time: "a sharp contrast results between the brief span of time occupied by the exterior event and the dreamlike wealth... which traverses a whole subjective universe" (Auerbach 538). And yet, isn't subjectivity a form of realism? It's the real way we experience time as it passes and keeps passing, some moments holding us longer than others. Woolf's abstractions of mental processes also acknowledge Lukacs' 'totality', while his objectivity "does not lead to a rejection of the subjective factor in art at all" (Lukacs 81). Lukacs and Woolf both agree that abstractions encompass a social reality, but they disagree afterwards. Lukacs still believes that objectivity is the key to realism, while Woolf leaves it behind. This is usually where the argument of realism ends—its obsession with objectivity.

However, as Woolf has shown us, a focus on mental processes reveals what objectivity cannot: an interiority that, while not universal, is still descriptive as it shrugs the bounds of 'actuality' that usually bind realists to objectivity. Most importantly, traditional realist artists are bound to "an empiricism that asserts knowledge can only derive from data actually present to the senses. It is a mode of representation, therefore, that cannot comprehend underlying social structures, forces and agency; as a result it cannot envisage any different actuality to that of the status quo" (Morris, 149). This refusal of actualism

works in Woolf's configurations of time, narrative, and aside (those moments which pull the reader outside of a narrative and seem to assert fact rather than subjective narrative). Auerbach notes, "it becomes possible to accomplish the shifting of the scene away from the window... smoothly.... The 'people' whose gossip is reproduced... [are] – not here and now, but it is still the same face and has the same expression" (Auerbach 539). All of these timeless and unreal moments end up becoming one full, real picture— of Mrs. Ramsay's face. This writing truly acknowledges the reality behind appearances; it doesn't need to position itself opposite idealism or remove itself from abstraction. It encompasses it all to create the condition of life, a life where other people have other ideas of you that are not your own and cannot be known to you other than as abstract entities. This space that is neither objective nor subjective is an in-between.

Woolf's work, like realism as a form, should not be confined to any historical period that limits the scope of its influence.

Woolf is solidly in the modernist camp for many, but placing her solidly in *any* camp ignores the fact that she can be most accurately understood as standing "at the juncture between deconstruction and New Historicism" (Morris 148). Because of this,

her work, like realism as a form, should not be confined to any historical period that limits the scope of its influence. For one thing, Woolf never mentions realism by name in either of her manifestoes (Morris 148), but does mention problems with actualism (only everything with being is actual), spiritualism (only the spirit is actual), and materialism (only matter and its modifications exist); all of which are polemical to her seemingly structure-less way of portraying human thought. In trying to tie themselves tightly to realism, traditional realist artists risk not being real at all.



Ultimately, realism should not be pinned down to one time or place, or limited to these historical aspects when discussing it, because the artists still using its aesthetic lessons much later on constitute a continuation of its life beyond its limited prescribed point in the canonical timeline. One must also ignore the emphasis on actualism that Lukacs asserts, as well as the opposition to older practices, such as idealism. These are not integral pieces of realism, but ideas added on by realist artists.

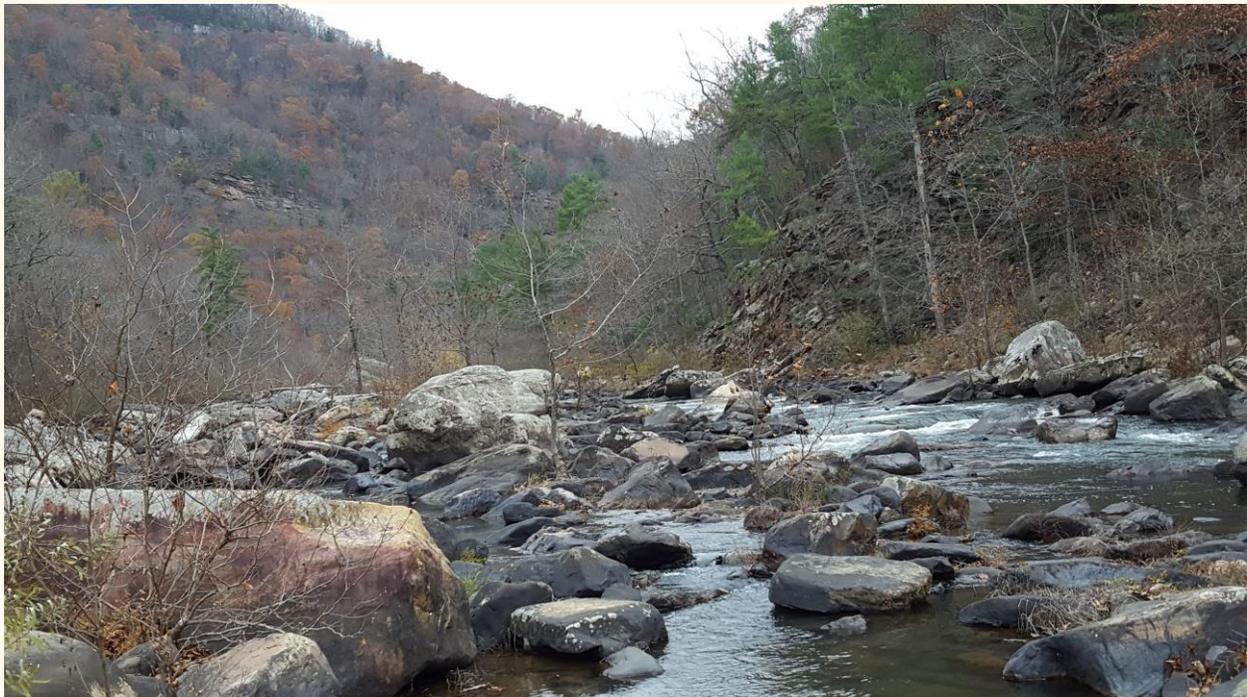
Only then may we acknowledge that realism adapts and changes to the way reality changes. While Lukacs and Woolf agree on the dynamic reality of truth, and the importance of subjectivity, Woolf's readiness to break with abstraction makes her writing difficult to pin down. Her fictional documentations of social realities through subjective narratives are especially exemplary of this kind of realism, which can fit neither into modernism or realism, and is therefore best explained as an in-between.

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Georg Lukacs, 'Marx and Engels on Aesthetics'



Cocke, Clinton, and Canals: How the Political Landscape in Antebellum America Affected Industrial Development

Matthew Gittelman, CLAS 2019

By the early 1820s, American economic development was in full-swing, with impassioned discussions about the future of industrialization and trade. States across the Union began to see the benefits of emerging technologies and, with the resource-rich western lands resting tantalizingly on the frontier, initialized efforts to support them. But not all state-wide strategies were created equal; project funding schemes and preferred engineering solutions differed, and for some states, such as Virginia, the process proved harder than it did for others. Indeed, canal networks never became a reliable avenue of trade in the Old Dominion, despite the fact that they found support from prominent members of the Virginia elite. A correspondence chain between one such proponent, John Hartwell Cocke, and Dewitt Clinton, the former governor of New York, provides valuable insight into why Virginia failed where other states succeeded.

In the initial note, Cocke praised Clinton for his accomplishments regarding the construction of the Erie Canal, a project that he had shepherded during his term as governor. Using the profession of acclaim as a springboard, Cocke announced his intention to involve himself in a similar business venture in his home state of Virginia. Though he never explicitly named the enterprise in this particular set of letters, it was known as the James River and Kanawha Canal Company. In the note, Cocke went on to describe his personal

belief in the importance of the “Science of Mineralogy” to the success of building massive works of engineering such as waterways. Due to Clinton’s perceived proficiency on the matter, Cocke asked him if he knew of any professor in the “north” who may be able to instruct his college-aged son. Cocke admitted that “it form[ed] no part of the course of studies adopted by settler of the colleges from our state”, a statement that indicates the historical discrepancy of industrial development between the North and the South.

All states may have existed within the same country, bound together by a federal constitution, but this did not mean that their economic interests always aligned

The second chronological letter in this chain contains Clinton’s reply. In it, Clinton boasted of the benefits of a canal transportation system, claiming that “[New York’s] internal trade is flourishing beyond all former experience.” Answering Cocke’s request, he then recommended for his son an instructor, Professor Silliman of Yale University, esteeming him as “a most distinguished lecturer of mineralogy.”

That Clinton, a New Yorker, decided to provide Cocke, a Virginian, with a helpful response is puzzling. All states may have existed within the same country, bound together by a federal constitution, but this did not mean that their economic interests always aligned. American citizenship possessed a dual nature -- that is, it simultaneously incorporated both state and national identities. Since people imbued great importance into their state allegiances, especially in Antebellum-era America, this necessitated economic competition throughout the country that often occurred in regional political units. So, then, why would a former governor of New York aid a man committed to the gains of another state?

A potential answer to this question is that Clinton spotted a common cause between Virginia and New York. When shipments of trade goods from the western territories sailed southward down the Mississippi, both states were cut out of the loop. For Clinton, it was arguably much more desirable for Virginia to instead attract cargo eastward, because then it would at least be located on



the same latitude as his state. Given that the east coast possessed developed transit networks and that New York City served as a port of international trade, the chances of the shipments reaching the Empire State grew considerably in such a scenario.

In the third letter, which is dated several months after the second, Cocke reported that his son was attending Yale and thanked Clinton for his initial recommendation. He also expressed a wish that, at the end of his son's matriculation at Yale, the young man personally visit the Erie Canal in the state of New York and view its continuing construction. Despite listing a few obstacles to his own venture in Virginia, such as unspecified developments in the state legislature that made "friends" of the canal project hesitant to invest their capital, Cocke expressed marked optimism at the ultimate success of the endeavor, believing that the public would eventually see it in its best interest. He also displayed sincere appreciation for receiving two copies of Clinton's "communication to the legislature of New York," which, while not detailed in the letter, presumably demonstrated how Clinton convinced his state's legislature to sign off on the Erie Canal.

Cocke's difficulty with securing finances for the canal project makes sense. In contrast with the Erie Canal in New York, which was bankrolled exclusively by public funds, Virginia's works drew from a hybrid of public and private inputs. Faced with oftentimes uncertain economic circumstances, as well as with a unique set of engineering challenges presented by the state's rugged frontier, wealthy donors were

sometimes skittish in their commitment to outlay capital.

In the final letter of the correspondence chain, Cocke announced his intention to pull his son out of Yale, believing that he had accrued enough knowledge on the science of mineralogy to finally “direct his mind to the useful application of his knowledge.” As before, Cocke disclosed struggles with obtaining funds from the state government, writing that “our politicians are under the influence of a similar delusion” that had once plagued the New York legislature with regard to the Erie Canal.



Although large portions of financial support for engineering projects came from private donors, the Commonwealth bureaucracy still exercised a high degree of control. Not only did the General Assembly often possess

controlling interests in the public stock companies, but it also maintained executive authority over project-related decisions, superseding the Board of Public Works. Internal factions within both the House of Delegates and the state Senate often quarreled with one another, impeding progress as a result. One notable source of tension was the debate on the merits of railroads versus the advantages of canals. Many prominent figures, such as Principal Engineer of the Board of Public Works, Claudius Crozet, favored the former, while others, including General Assembly member, Joseph Cabell, advocated for the latter.

Cocke ended his final letter with marked optimism, conveying his belief that “better counsels will soon prevail,” and that “[Virginia] too will follow in the wake of your glorious example.” However, Cocke’s ambitions would never come to fruition. Despite the fact that Virginia began construction of its waterway before New York did, the Erie Canal was completed long before the James and Kanawha River Company saw any sustained success. On the eve of the Civil War, the project still had not seen completion, and it never would. Governmental factionalism and flimsy private donations were simply too great to overcome.

The letters referenced are housed in the John Hartwell Cocke Papers in the University of Virginia Special Collections Library, call number MSS 640.