

IMAGINING, PRACTICING AND CONTESTING ROAD DEVELOPMENT
IN SOUTHERN WEST VIRGINIA, 1920S TO 1970S

By

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ABSTRACT

Roads are ubiquitous yet few understand the historical and political geographies of their development. Politics, scale, and geographical imagination interweave in processes of promoting and building highways. This dissertation explores geographical imaginations of road development in West Virginia during the 1920s to 1970s with a focus on efforts to link the Great Lakes and Florida through southern West Virginia and southwestern Virginia. Due to its steep and uneven terrain the region is often viewed as remote and isolated, but it was considered an essential link between the Great Lakes and Florida. This research explores three phases of the region's highway development: the transition between named historic-scenic trails and the numbered U.S. Highway System in the 1920s and 1930s; the development of the highly contested West Virginia Turnpike in the 1950s; and the incorporation of the turnpike into the interstate highway system during the 1960s and 1970s. This research enlivens road development by examining demands for better highways and its contestation. West Virginians have a long history of vying for improved road space. To explore the complexities of road development I utilize a simple framework of materiality, meaning, and practice. The advantage of this trifold approach is that it uncovers imaginations of road development and its contestation at multiple scales ranging from national imaginaries to local road uses. I draw heavily on the concepts of kinaesthetics and rhythm to consider how envisioning and contesting road space were intertwined with popular understandings of driving and riding roads in historically and geographically contingent circumstances. Kinaesthetics, the awareness of one's body in motion, helps us uncover how driving deplorable roads was used as a political tool to encourage improvement. Rhythm is useful for exploring how roads were commodified and practiced.

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Chapter 1

Exploring Geographical Imaginations of Road Development in West Virginia's Southern Coalfields

Americans spend much of their lives on highways, yet few understand the complex geographies behind their development. In their book *Kentucky's Frontier Highway: Historical Landscapes along the Maysville Road* (2012), Raitz and O'Malley observe "We tend to think of roads as without origins, ahistorical and ageographical, they simply exist as background landscape without acknowledgement of their obscure origins and enigmatic evolution" (2012, 47). Indeed, roads are much more than backgrounds between points. Politics, scale, and geographical imaginations interweave in processes of envisioning and building highways. In my home region of southern West Virginia, for example, roads are frequently of interest. Many are cut into mountainsides, and the narrow, curvy roads are difficult and often dangerous to drive. In McDowell and Mercer, two counties in the state's southern coalfields, US Route 52 is disparaged as "The Highway that Time Forgot" (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Apr 13, 2013; Aug 2, 2012; Oct 24, 2010). Its detractors consider US 52 an anachronism, but the route's origins have been largely forgotten. Indeed, the highway that many criticize as unfit was once envisioned as a link in a named auto trail between the Great Lakes and Florida.

Ultimately, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway traversed neither US 52 nor Florida, but it nonetheless proved an influential imaginary shaping both West Virginian and American road space. The Lakes-to-Florida concept drew on contemporary discourses of road space including named auto trails, turnpikes, US Highways, and the Interstate

Highway System. The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway linked West Virginia physically and imaginatively to itself and America at large. During the 1920s and 1930s, when the period that this dissertation analyzes began, the Lakes-to-Florida concept developed from the visions of road enthusiasts into highways that remain to this day, including US Routes 19 and 21. US Route 52, the narrow winding route that failed as a section of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway, developed into an indispensable route between the coalfields of McDowell County to the commercial centers of Mercer County. From the city of Bluefield in Mercer County US 52 connected US 21, the route chosen as the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway. During the 1950s to 1970s the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway concept emerged, yet again, in contests over the West Virginia Turnpike and Interstate 77. Perhaps few people today realize that each of these highways involved long-distance geographical imaginations between the Great Lakes and Florida. Geographical imaginations of road space are multi-scalar, and the north-south geographical imaginations of road space that began in the 1920s influenced local, regional and national imaginations of road space. By exploring these historical and political geographies of West Virginia's road development at scales ranging from the nation to short stretches of roadway, this dissertation provides insights into how geographical imaginations of road space interweave with social materialities, meanings and practices. The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway drew on modern discourses that valued connectivity, shrinking time-spaces as well as safe, fast, and reliable highways mirroring demands for and contests over road development.

This dissertation explores geographical imaginations of road development in West Virginia during the 1920s to 1970s with a focus on multi-scalar hopes and conflicts of modernizing highways. Many of its highways are narrow and curvy, and traverse steep and

uneven terrain. This dissertation demonstrates that West Virginians have a long history of vying for better roads. The reasons for this are numerous and include greater safety and comfort, as well as improved local and long distance connectivity. Roads are not always imagined in such abstract terms, but are also viewed through acts of driving and riding them.

Since imagining roads includes the corporeality of traversing them, it is essential to consider how tangible aspects of roads such as the road surface, cars, and bodies intertwine with the intangible features of roads: hopes, fears, comfort, and other values attached to road space. A balanced approach to geographical imaginations of road development takes such varied and multi-scalar aspects into account for although roads connect places near and far, they pass numerous small places along the way. It is the multi-scalarity of roads over time that makes their historical and political geographies such intriguing subjects of study. By exploring road development over a period touching more than six decades, this dissertation explores places that aimed to connect to larger places, and small places that have been largely forgotten.

Exploring Past Geographical Imaginations of Road Space

In this section, I present theoretical concepts of mobility that play significant roles in my methodology. To explore the complexity of road development, I adapt a simple triad developed by Cresswell (2009), who notes that places are comprised of materiality, meaning, and practice. Rather than focus on place, I adapt the triad to explore how geographical imaginations of roads are inherently tied to materiality, meaning and

practice. Geographical imagination is not merely a mental activity, but is also tangible and practiced (Daniels 2011). Roads are constructed of materials such as concrete, asphalt or gravel in particular dimensions depending upon the construction methods and physical limitations of the site, but they are much more than materials; they are also ideological and emotional constructs. Considering meaning reveals why certain materialities were valued over others.

Questions of meaning include: What hopes and expectations were attached a road space? Were local or long distance connectivities valued differently? Is a particular road considered safe or convenient, or dangerous and difficult? Other questions of meaning concern differences between planning roads and using them. For example, how did the ideologies of a road's planners clash with everyday perceptions of that road?

Considering practice is a vital means to explore a road's meanings since they involve interactions with materialities of roads, bodies and vehicles in motion along roads. For example, whether a road is considered good, bad or adequate depends largely on the collective meanings evoked through driving and riding it. Such simplified notions of "good", "bad" or "adequate" are also dependent upon scale. This dissertation enlivens the politics of past road development by considering how their materialities, meanings and practices changed, and how they varied according to scales ranging from the nation to the body. Roads may traverse long distances, but they exist materially and are practiced through quite small scales along the route.

Contents of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into three empirical chapters that focus on the intertwining development of various road spaces in particular times in the Virginias and beyond. Three themes are present in each chapter. First, each highlights the multi-scalarity of road space and considers how the imaginaries and politics of long distance highways were also local. Second, each chapter explores how the materialities, meanings and practices of road space intersect in the contested geographical imaginations of road space in particular places and times. Third, each chapter considers the changing yet enduring roles of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association in the production of road space in the two Virginias, particularly in the area of southern West Virginia and southwestern Virginia near Bluefield, West Virginia. Each highway discussed in this dissertation intersected Bluefield making it an important site of multi-scalar road politics.

In chapter 2, “Theorizing Road Space and Geographical Imaginations of Mobility,” I describe the theoretical framework that guides this dissertation. I draw largely on Lefebvre’s (1991) *Production of Space* and Cresswell’s (2009) notion of place as materiality, meaning and practice. I also review past geographical scholarship on roads, and introduce a diverse theoretical repertoire that enlivens historical and political geographies of road development.

In chapter 3, “Modernity and Industrialization in West Virginia’s Southern Coalfields: Confronting Images of Isolation and Backwardness,” I review the origins of stereotypes that paint West Virginia and Appalachia as backward and isolated. I then provide a brief history of the three major railroads in West Virginia’s southern coalfields to illustrate that the region was an integrally joined to the nation. Besides highlighting the

region's modernity and connectivity during the late 18th and early 20th centuries, this section introduces significant places discussed throughout the dissertation.

In chapter 4, "Methods to Explore Geographical Imaginations of West Virginia's Road Development," I present my data sources, methods, and major omissions. I discuss my research process and the usefulness of using online newspaper archives, such as newspaperarchive.com, to explore historical and political geographies of road development.

In chapter 5, "West Virginia and the Fight for a Through Route to Florida," I introduce visions and conflicts surrounding endeavors to link the Great Lakes and Florida through the Virginias. This chapter focuses on the development of two Lakes-to-Florida auto trails that developed into US Route 21 during the 1920s. It highlights how those visions of road space influenced, and were influenced by, the materiality, meaning and practice of road space. I appropriate Lefebvre's (1991) notion of conceived and perceived space to explore how materiality, meaning and practice intertwine in the politics of road space.

In chapter 6, "The Super-Highway That Time Forgot," I examine the development of US 52 from the 1920s to the 1930s in McDowell and Mercer counties. US 52 failed as a link in the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway, but served as an essential link to the coalfields. Chapter 6 ponders the intertwining of the materiality and practice of road space and how that influences its meanings. I draw heavily on Sheller's (2004, 2007) concepts of kinaesthetics and embodiment to demonstrate that the mobilities can be lively despite significant gaps and conflicts over the suitability of a road space. Along with Sheller, I use Edensor (2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2010) to explore how rhythm and spatial

orderings are used to differentiate between modern and backwards road space. I also consider the seemingly contradictory roles of overcoming and preserving nature in the development of road space.

In chapter 7, “Incorporating a Contested Two-lane Turnpike into the Modern Interstate Highway System,” I follow the development of the infamous West Virginia Turnpike and efforts to link it within Interstate 77 during the 1950s to 1970s. I examine the turnpike and I-77 as sites of clashing conceptions of road space. I contextualize its contested development by drawing attention to the use of exceptions whereby those with the power to do so bent and excluded conceptions of materiality, meaning and practice for political and practical purposes. Collectively, these three empirical chapters uncover the “obscure origins and enigmatic evolution” that Raitz and O’Malley (2012, 47) proclaimed necessary for studies of road development.

In Chapter 8, “Toward a Critical Humanist Approach to Road Space,” I conclude by considering the viability of critical humanism (Adams, Hoelscher and Till 2001) as a means to explore historical and political geographies of road development. I contend that the best way to examine West Virginia’s struggle for modern road development is through critical humanism’s acceptance of contradiction. Modernity and backwardness are neither discrete nor opposites. Indeed, they exist in many aspects of modern life as change makes past development seem antiquated. Critical humanism explores change, modernity and backwardness in a manner that is appropriate given the Appalachia’s long history with negative stereotypes. Through the acceptance of contradiction, we can understand that West Virginia is not presently nor did it ever exemplify negative stereotypes. To the contrary, West Virginia’s road development was deeply involved in

the politics of modernity at scales ranging from small sections of road to the nation. Collectively, each chapter enlivens West Virginia's past by exploring its historical and political geographies. Stereotypes overlook the complexity of West Virginia's struggles for modernity. Likewise, new methods and methodologies reveal just how similar the past was to the present.

Chapter 2

Theorizing Road Space and Geographical Imaginations of Mobility

In this chapter I discuss theoretical approaches that guide this dissertation's exploration of contested visions of road space, and review research on the study of roads and geographical imagination. This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I introduce two triads that frame the research on roads and geographical imagination: Cresswell's (2009) trifold conception of place as materiality, meaning, and practice and Lefebvre's (1991) triad of conceived, perceived and lived spaces. Second, I review geographical approaches to roads within the cultural landscape tradition that was popular among during much of the last half of the 20th century. Cultural geographers were adept at describing the material landscapes surrounding roads, but expressed little concern for practice or politics. As I discuss below, some cultural geographers were notable for valuing the intangible or imaginative aspects of material landscapes. Third, I expand on the discussion of practice by considering how practice has been approached within diverse theoretical contexts, including humanistic geography, new mobilities literature, and non-representational geographies. I draw heavily on the concepts of kinaesthetics and rhythm to consider how envisioning and contesting road space were intertwined with popular understandings of driving and riding them in historically and geographically contingent circumstances.

Imagining Road Space as Materiality, Meaning and Practice.

To explore the complexity of road development, this dissertation is greatly informed by Cresswell's (2009) trifold conception of place as comprised of materiality, meaning, and practice. Cresswell used the triad to explore the development and contestation of place, yet I adapt it to explore contested visions of road space. Like places, roads are also material, meaningful and practiced. Roads are constructed of materials such as concrete, asphalt or gravel in particular dimensions depending upon contemporary construction methods and physical limitations of the site. Nonetheless, roads are much more than materials, they are also ideological and emotional constructs. Examining intersections between meaning, materiality, and practice uncovers the political complexities of road space at multiple scales.

The politics of meaning are revealed through such questions as: Was a particular road considered safe or convenient, or dangerous and difficult? Were local or long distance connectivities valued differently? Some questions of meaning concern the differences between planning and using roads. For example, how did the ideologies of a road's planners clash with everyday perceptions of the use of that road? Considering practice, then, is necessary to explore a road's meanings. Whether a road is envisioned as good, bad or adequate depends largely on the meanings evoked through driving and riding it in specific material circumstances such as changing seasons, and evolving technologies and expectations. As I reveal throughout this dissertation, using the triad to explore visions of past road development enlivens its politics at scales ranging from the nation to the body. Roads may traverse long distances, but they are practiced through quite small scales along the route material surface and physiographical settings.

To grasp the value of exploring geographical imaginations of road space as materiality, meaning and practice I found it useful to consider two meanings of the word “immaterial.” One definition of “immaterial” denotes intangibility as opposed to materiality. In this sense, something is spiritual or cognitive rather than tangible and physical. A second definition of “immaterial” conveys a sense of irrelevance. This definition implies a lack of materiality, and connotes triviality just as the word “substantial” alludes to the overwhelming importance of substance. Conceptually, geographical imagination brings both definitions of “immaterial” together by acknowledging the intertwining of intangibility and materiality in debates over what is significant or not. Inquiries into geographical imaginations include how intangible visions of space and place are materialized, and how ideals, ideologies, and laws that are tied up in materialities. As Daniels (2011, 184) proclaimed, geographical imaginations can “bring material and mental worlds into closer conjunction, to connect the mythical and the mundane.” Likewise, materiality, meaning and practice encompass both the imagined ideals and the banalities of everyday life for road development involves cycles of visions for the future, and practicalities living in the present. How we understand the world and position ourselves within it (Schwartz and Ryan 2003, 6) involves geographical imaginations that are practiced differently according to positionality and ideology. In the section below I present a useful way to consider positionalities and ideologies within the context of road development and conflicts over differentiated visions and experiences of road space.

Lefebvre's Triad and Geographical Imaginations of Development

To uncover the politics of road development and its intertwining with materiality, meaning, and practice, I draw substantially on Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1991) and his triad of perceived, conceived, and lived space. It is from Lefebvre's "production of space" that I chose the phrase "road space" to denote the collective vision, use and contestation of roads. In this section, I briefly describe Lefebvre's triad and how I apply it to road space. I also explain why I utilize two facets of his triad rather than the all three. Lefebvre intended his triad as an aid to differentiate and analyze the power, struggles, and the subsequent alienation involved in capitalist creations of space and place, but his thoughts are greatly applicable to road space. As Brenner (1997, 144) observed, "Lefebvre argues that the social spaces of contemporary capitalism overlap and interpenetrate one another, often in highly conflictual, contradictory ways." While this dissertation does not foreground the alienation component of his triad, it is nonetheless useful to follow Lefebvre's direction and contemplate the contests between abstract ideologies that create road space, and the mundane practices of driving and riding them.

Lefebvre's idea of perceived space, or *spatial practice*, involves the mixture of material structures and the performance of everyday life (Lefebvre 1991, 38; Adams 2009). By providing the infrastructure for people's work and leisure, perceived space is reproduced through repetition (Lefebvre 1991; Merrifield 1993). Geographical imaginations of perceived road space involve the meanings that are attached to the everyday practices and materialities of roads. As Merrifield (1993, 524) explained, "People's perceptions condition their daily reality with respect to the usage of space."

Perceived space relates to geographical imaginations that involve the “feeling and doing” (Crouch 2001) of space.

Lefebvre’s notion of conceived space, or *representations of space*, concerns abstracted space (Lefebvre 1991; Merrifield 1993) as dreamed up and calculated by “scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent – all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived” (Lefebvre 1991, 38). Conceived space is technically derived and involves numerous laws, such as the equations used by engineers.

Geographical imaginations involve conceived space when the “ideology and knowledge” (Merrifield 1993, 523) of development is materially forced onto the surface. Conceived space is thought and implemented, but is enacted through the spatial practice of perceived space. Conceived road space often conflicts with perceived road space, particularly as popular expectations of road space change, or when the practice of driving roads exposes problems in the logic of their design. The majority of this dissertation concerns conflicts between conceived and perceived spaces.

Lefebvre’s concept of *representational spaces* holds that they are “*lived through its associated images and symbols*” (Lefebvre 1991, 39 italics in original). Adams (2009, 176) views Lefebvre’s notion of lived space as close to geographical conceptions of place. Given Lefebvre’s statement that lived space is “space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (1991, 39). I consider lived space as a form of counter-cultural sensing of place, and it upon this point that I deviate from the triad. Because Lefebvre considered such lived spaces as predominantly non-verbal (Lefebvre 1991, 39), they are “inherently, resistant to capture and simplification” (Adams 2009, 176). Given

this dissertation's concern for geographical imaginations of elites, including politicians, business leaders and road enthusiasts, and the predominant use of newspapers for historical data, so-called lived spaces were much more difficult to uncover than perceived and conceived spaces. Nevertheless, Lefebvre's differentiation between conceiving and perceiving space proved useful as tools to draw out the politics of road space and its intertwining with materiality, meaning, and practice.

Exploring Roads as Cultural Landscape

One influential approach to the study of roads and their geographical imaginations was the work cultural and historical geographers who viewed roads as features of the cultural landscape. By stressing that the material world involved intangibles beyond what can be readily seen and quantified, cultural landscape geographers established the importance of geographical imaginations. Meinig (1979), for example, noted that elements of cultural landscape such as roads are not simply tangible, but interpreted mentally as well. "Any landscape," Meinig observed, "is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads" (1979, 34). While he was certainly not the first geographer to consider the importance of geographical imaginations (Wright 1947; Lowenthal 1961), Meinig's concept of the "beholding eye" acknowledged that academics view landscapes subjectively according to the broader issues of concern such as "landscape as Problem" (39-41); "landscape as Wealth" (41-42); and "landscape as Ideology" (42-43). West Virginians have long desired to modernize and standardize the state's roads to improve their safety, consistency and connectivity. Wealth has also

played a significant role in discourses of West Virginia's road space as politicians, and business and civic leaders sought to improve West Virginia's economic ties.

As elements of cultural landscapes, roads facilitate the worldviews that influence their creation (Schein 1997). In "Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene," Peirce Lewis (1979) noted that because landscapes cost tremendous amounts financially, temporally, and emotionally, major landscapes usually reflect changes at a national scale (1979, 15). This observation is particularly true of changes to West Virginia's road space, where heated debates frequently centered on what constitutes an acceptable highway, how to pay for its construction, and what places should benefit from routings. Changes to West Virginia's road space mirrored broader discussions taking place nationally and regionally. Despite the applicability of such axioms to road development, Lewis's axioms are best suited for discerning landscapes that are readily and visually available for examination. Past geographical imaginations are not easily conjured by observing extant landscapes without a familiarity of the ideologies that influenced their construction (Mitchell 2008).

Working within the cultural landscape tradition, John Jakle has long explored the evolution of road space and automobile travel, covering such related topics as roadside motels (1980) and roadside restaurants (1982). More recently, Jakle collaborated with Keith Sculle to produce a prolific collection of scholarship on road and automobile-influenced landscapes. A common theme in their work is the evolution and standardization of landscape covering a wide variety of topics, including gas stations (1994), fast food establishments (1999), signs (2004), and auto garages (2013). Jakle and Sculle make proficient use of archival material, including brochures, to present a broad picture of

changing geographical imaginations of road space. Their book *Motoring: The Highway Experience in America* (2008) provides a clear overview of American road and highway development, including chapters on the good roads movement (chapter 2), changing views of natural landscapes (chapter 7), and limited-access highways (chapter 8). Jakle and Sculle's research covers a broad range of time periods and regions, making their work accessible to a larger audience. What is lost, however, with such an approach is consideration of how roads developed in particular places. Mauch and Zeller's edited volume *Windshield Wilderness* (2008) presents much on the politics of landscaping roads to suit the driving public. Whisnant's chapter (2008), for example, explores the politics of landscaping the Blue Ridge Parkway; its title proclaims matter-of-factly that the "Scenic is Political" (2008). Wyckoff's (2006) *On the Road Again: Montana's Changing Landscape* describes changes to the state's landscape as visualized from the road. Such works, from large-scale surveys to smaller scale examinations, highlight the fact that roads are inherently multi-scalar. It is useful to explore how geographical imaginations at larger scales interweave with those of particular places. Merriman (2005, 2007) contributed to studies of road space by shedding light on the politics and historical and cultural geographies of planning, constructing and consuming the M1 Motorway in England. Merriman's *Driving Spaces* (2007) shows research on the landscapes of road space can go far beyond idiographic descriptions, but were envisioned and contested.

It is through such interweaving that the multi-scalar nature of roads is most clearly revealed. For example, Raitz (1998) explored the evolution of American roads and embraced a multi-scalar approach to examine the development of individual roads, and observed correctly that roads are economic and social, as well as material, phenomena.

Geographical imaginations of road development are likewise concerned with much more than the material conditions of highways. Raitz and Thompson's (1996) edited book *The National Road* explores the landscapes of America's first national highway. Raitz and O'Malley's book *Kentucky's Frontier Highway: Historical Landscapes along the Maysville Road* (2012) follows the development of a road and its landscapes from its beginnings as a footpath to a major modern highway. As with Jakle and Sculle's *Motoring* (2008), *Kentucky's Frontier Highway* includes much on the development of travel tastes and politics but Raitz and O'Malley (2012) follow how each interweaves with the local, regional, and national single highway. Their approach foregrounds the constancy of change and illustrates how changes to road space occur at different scales, rhythms and trajectories. *Kentucky's Frontier Highway* presents rich histories of usage through its roadside landscapes and methods of road construction. Raitz and O'Malley proclaim the significance of exploring the "obscure origins and enigmatic evolution" of roads rather than taking roads for granted (2012, 47). Highway development involves an interweaving of technologies, aesthetics and politics (Raitz and O'Malley 2012). It is through such obscure origins and enigmatic evolutions that geographical imaginations of road development emerge and intersect beyond simple notions of roads as problems, wealth, or ideologies (Meinig 1979).

Thinking Practice and the Production of Road Space

Although the cultural landscape tradition contains frequent illustrations of geographical imaginations, it lacks significant attention to the politics of roads. This dissertation maintains that a fruitful way to explore obscurities and evolutions of road

development is by considering practices. Past practices exemplify Raitz and O'Malley's call to uncover the obscurity and enigmatic revolution of roads. Roads are paradoxical in that they are both ubiquitous and obscure. Their practice is ubiquitous in the sense that many have driven and ridden roads. Their practice is obscure, however, in that roads are driven and ridden differently given great differences in their materialities, topographies, and the capabilities of motor vehicles. As Massey (1993, 1994) observed with her concept of power-geometries, not all people move equally freely. Some are powerful and move at will, while others move frequently but are not "'in charge' of the process" (Massey 1993, 61). Massey supports an open sense of place that acknowledges and welcomes interactions between peoples and understands that our everyday lives are influenced by people and objects from many parts of the world (Massey 2005). Massey's work has been highly influential in exploring place and space as constantly changing and moving.

Past geographical imaginations of road development are difficult to uncover because the hopes, desires, and expectations of road space are historically and geographically relative. When exploring a road's past, it is essential to consider that practices of driving played significant roles in how roads are conceived and perceived. Roads are conceived by engineers, bureaucrats, and business leaders and built to fit their preconceived notions. Roads are perceived, however, through the practice of driving and riding them. Perceptions and practice then contribute to later conceptions of road space as geographical imaginations of driving and developing roads interweave. In West Virginia, the politics of practice played a tremendous role in geographical imaginations of road development. The cultural landscape tradition has contributed greatly to the study of road development, but highways are much more than landscapes. Although the cultural

landscape approach has provided much to the study of roads, there is danger of overlooking the actual practice of roads. Roads are not merely platforms from which to view landscapes. Roads are cultural artifacts and trained observers can tell much about a place and its politics from them, but how roads are used is equally important. Studies of roads require attention to the practice of driving and riding them. By exploring practices, one can uncover much about past road development and the places they connect.

Studying the practice of roads permits a more nuanced examination of road development. It is a recent trend in mobilities studies to consider practice, but practice is far from new. A pioneer in the study of highways, J.B. Jackson introduced *odology*, “the science or study of roads,” as a way of studying vernacular landscapes (1984, 21) and accessing landscape (1994). Jackson maintained the importance of roads in the American landscape. As Davis explains, “Many of Jackson’s most notable essays were devoted to explaining the commercial roadside and defending it from the forces that sought to eradicate it in the name of efficiency and good taste” (2003, 64). Cresswell (2003) notes that Jackson’s understanding of roads and landscape had a deep appreciation for the practice of driving. For example, Jackson preferred the word “way” to “road,” because he felt it conveyed the intended purposes and manners of using particular roads (1984). Jackson took frequent cross-country excursions by motorcycle and pick-up, and maintained what Cresswell called a “mobile view of landscape” (2003, 275). Roads are lived and expressed through combinations of materiality, meaning and practice. While driving or riding, incongruences can frequently emerge between the materialities and meanings of roads and their practice. We often wish landscapes to remain congruent with our visions of them, but as Jonathan Smith stressed, “every self-image humans have

written into the landscape will betray its pretensions with ironic affirmations of an order that is both wider and weirder” (1993 87). Roads decay and their materiality falls below expectations, making the practice of driving difficult. The materialities, meanings, and practices of road space are frequently incongruent with our views of what constitutes an ideal or even an acceptable road space.

Humanism and Mobility

Our pretensions of road space, and desires for comfort, consistency, and speed are often challenged by the actions, or practices of others. Humanistic geographers such as Tuan (1974, 1977) and Relph (1976, 2001) have long challenged the encroachment of modern development into place, space and landscape. Tuan (1974, 1977) critiqued modernity for robbing place of its warmth and liveliness. Applauding modernity’s role in promoting equality, Tuan (1996, 8) refers to himself as a high modernist. Relph (1976) criticized modernism for its homogeneity and utilitarianism, and insisted that modern roads detract from place and make it *placeless*. In a similar manner the anthropologist Marc Augé (1995) noted that highways constitute *non-places*, exploring the practice of roads shows that demands for road development were frequently tied to desires for safety and connectivity.

Promoting a critical humanistic approach that he refers to as “critical geosophy,” Cresswell (2001, 2003, 2011) commends humanism’s appreciation for place and its meanings. Cresswell proclaimed that landscape hides, or obliterates the complexities of practice by foregrounding stationary scenes, and ignoring the inherent mobility that exist everywhere. He eschews the use of landscape and its simplified meanings and instead

prefers the concept of place to denote the liveliness or mobility of everyday life (Merriman et al. 2008). Practices such as work, movements and other activities are ignored or “obliterated” and turned into scenery when the focus is on landscape. In a similar manner, Ingold noted the ephemerality of landscape and warned, “landscape is always in the nature of a ‘work in progress’” (1993, 162). Ingold (1993) prefers the concept of *taskscape* to indicate the collective actions, or practices, that comprise a given landscape. Noting the presence of ironies, Smith (1993) observed that while we may imagine landscapes as ideal, stagnant scenes, our pretensions are challenged by incongruities between our ideals and other people’s actions within that landscape. Focusing on practice makes it possible to explore how the materialities and myriad practices of road space facilitated and hindered their uses and meanings. This dissertation shows that demands for road development were frequently tied to desires for safety and connectivity.

Much of everyday life is practiced on or near roadways. Edensor (2010) adapted the concept of the *roadscape* from Ingold’s (1993, 2010) *taskscape*, the collective actions that occur in a place or space. *Taskscape* complements Ingold’s (2011) concept of *wayfaring*, embodied and inhabiting movements, rather than the simple traversing across space implied in *transport*. Edensor’s concept of *roadscape* recognizes that roads are multiply encoded and practiced (2003). *Roadscape* also include the ideology and planning that went into their creation and the practices, narratives, visualities and other imaginaries that occur in and along them. Combining practice and meaning, a road’s ideologies include the laws, narratives, and expectations that people generally understand and follow. It is through this folding of the practice, material and intangible, the solid

and the fluid, that roadways become roadsapes. Though we often take them for granted such things as “text and narrative,” and a road’s “surroundings” are important aspects of the spatial stories of roads (Edensor 2003).

In the mountainous rural and urban settings explored in this dissertation, straighter and wider roads were generally considered better than the curvy and narrow roads that preceded them. In her poem “The Hard Road,” (1991, 96) Louise McNeill, West Virginia’s poet laureate (1979-1993), reflected on the contestation of road development:

“When they looped and curled through the rocky cuts,
When they brought the world,
When they leaped the gorge,
When they lowered the hill,
When they brought the world with its good and ill.”

McNeill lauded roads for connecting to the world beyond, but lamented the loss of place. She noted that before the construction of roads in the late 1920s, the farm was all she knew (Harshman 2013). Her knowledge of the outside world was facilitated through road development. McNeill understood that roads development is contested. Roads can be both appreciated and contested. As I discuss throughout this dissertation, West Virginia’s roads were contested from numerous positions. Routing, safety, and reliability played significant roles in the politics of West development. Conceptually, the cultural landscape offers intriguing possibilities for exploring the materialities road space, but introducing the role of meaning and practice helps us understand road development as geographical in motion. To further delve into the meanings ascribed to the practices of mobility I turn to the “new mobilities” literature.

Using 'New Mobilities' to Study Old Mobilities

In recent years there has been increased attention to the subject of mobilities. Urry and Sheller's (2006) new mobilities paradigm influenced many to examine how new technologies enable and link mobile worlds. Ashgate's series on mobility includes such topics as gendered mobilities (Uteng and Cresswell 2008); rhythm (Edensor 2010); and place (Bærenholdt and Granås 2008). *Mobilities*, a peer reviewed journal established in 2006, presents current thought on numerous aspects of mobility from leading thinkers. Despite the influence of the new mobilities paradigm, some observers caution that it focuses too much on the extraordinary. For example, Binnie et al. (2007) criticized new mobilities research for privileging "spatially extensive movements" instead of shorter and more banal mobilities (2007). Merriman (2007) warned against discounting older geographical works that considered mobility, but reminds us that Sheller and Urry (2006) did not set out to form a "new 'grand narrative'" (Merriman 2007). Cresswell (2010) applauded new mobilities research as a means of engaging the complexities and politics of mobility, but he also cautioned against focusing too much "on twenty-first-century high-tech hypermobility" (2011, 553). According to Cresswell, understanding present mobilities requires learning about past mobilities (2010, 2011a). This may seem like a trite observation, but it is noteworthy because the "new" in new mobilities research suggests cutting-edge technologies, and not merely a new emphasis on the subject of mobility (Cresswell 2011b, 2012b). Indeed, new mobilities research provides useful tools to explore old mobilities such as road development that involved then-new and exciting discourses of the potential for roads. This dissertation considers both old and new mobilities by exploring

road development when it was considered cutting-edge, when the roads that many take for granted today were first envisioned, driven and contested.

Road space is inherently uneven and political. Roads may be simultaneously good or bad depending on factors such as whom the road is meant for, where the road is located, and who is inconvenienced by it. To better explore the unevenness of road development, and its intertwining with materiality, meaning and practice, this dissertation draws heavily on kinaesthetics and rhythm, two concepts that consider how mobility is embodied, ordered and contested. Kinaesthetics engages the ways that the materialities of bodies, highways and motor vehicles intertwine when driving, and become implicated in contested meanings of road space. Concepts of rhythm add to the study of roads by considering how temporality and materiality merge to form ideas and expectations of consistency. I elaborate on each in the following sections below.

Mobilities and Kinaesthetics: The Body-Machine of Road Space

Kinaesthetics is an awareness and feeling of the body and its position during movement. It combines embodiment and the practice of mobility. As Sheller (2007) points out, spaces of mobility are greatly transformed by kinaesthetics. Roads are felt and practiced by actual moving bodies. Attention to kinaesthetics evolved from interests in embodiment, and Haraway's idea of the cyborg (1991), a complex mixture of human, machine, practice and materiality. Through attention to the embodiment of practice, new mobilities research considers the myriad ways that bodies, roads and vehicles interact. Similarly, geographical imaginations do not simply envision connections, but also the road's embodied journeys. Explorations of geographical imagination should reflect this

embodiment. In their seminal article "The City and the Car," Sheller and Urry (2000, 739) observed, "the car-driver is a 'hybrid' assemblage, not simply of autonomous humans, but simultaneously of machines, roads, buildings, signs and entire cultures of mobility. Sheller (2007) expounded further on the concept of embodied automobility. "Driving," she observed, "can be described as a practice that intertwines and mixes the human and the inhuman, the person and the thing, the material and the informational" (Sheller 2007, 177). Sheller described the practice of driving as a cybercar, or human-machine. Driving is, of course, a practice of road space. The road, vehicle and (in)human are material, while the informational involves meaning.

Jensen, Sheller and Wind uphold kinaesthetics as a key facet of a "relational view of mobilities" (2014, 2). "In a relational view of mobilities," they contend, "it is first of all through our haptic sense of touch and our kinaesthetic sense of bodily motion that we apprehend time and space, orient ourselves towards the world, and create place (and affect) through the frictions and rhythms of our movement through natural and built environments" (Jensen, Sheller and Wind 2014, 2). Geographical imaginations therefore are also influenced through relations, or hybrids of meanings, materialities and practices. Embodied movement, or kinaesthetics, is crucial to uncovering geographical imaginations of road development. Kinaesthetics ties imagination to the materiality, meaning and practice of road space through the complex activities of travel, the materialities of roads, vehicles and bodies and the various meanings mobilities are granted by governments, commerce, and the driving and riding public. Kinaesthetic geographical imaginations are expressed through what Sheller referred to as "automotive emotions," or "embodied dispositions of car-users" (2004, 223). Embodied dispositions involve the perceptions and

expectations of what constitutes an ideal or even acceptable road. Many Americans, for example, expect their roads to be comfortable, reliable, and consistent (Jakle and Sculle 2008).

Affect and Embodied Emotions

Like the concept of affect espoused by non-representational and more-than-representational geography (Thrift 2000, 2004; Lorimer 2005, 2008; Dewsbury 2009; Harrison and Anderson 2012), automotive emotions and embodied dispositions explore the intertwining of embodiment, movement and emotion. Affect, however, concerns banal experiences, and the exploration of the hard-to-grasp subtleties of “becoming” (Thrift 1999; Dewsbury 2009). Dewsbury (2009, 20) describes affect as a radical concept that is hard to grasp and difficult to discuss:

It is at once a seemingly necessary and useful idea with which to confront and reveal key aspects of practice, embodiment, and performative-based understandings of sociality, and at the same time steals our intent as academics, forcing us to rethink the habitual interpretations we live through, thus taking us into unfamiliar ways of thinking that are not easily written up fit for academic dissemination.

Non-representational geography is radical in that it unpacks the noteworthiness of phenomena that might otherwise be considered rather petty for academic research (Lorimer 2005). Wylie’s (2005) account of a day’s journey walking a coastal path in southern England stands as a fitting example of how a rather inconsequential topic as a self-narration of a leisurely walk can provide unique insights into embodiment, emotion and their intertwining with materiality and practice. Edensor’s (2003) unpacking of his daily commutes along England’s M-6 motorway as a means of “defamiliarizing” what many would consider a boring and mundane drive. Although, it has many critics (Nash 2000;

Cresswell 2012a) who question its political relevance, and success as excluding representation, I find non-representational geography's concern for immaterial phenomena useful in a study of road development.

Rather than focus on the ephemeral aspects of practice, I consider such small movements as parts of the multi-scalar development of road space. When studied collectively over a long period of time, the fleeting movements and moments appreciated by non-representational geographers interweave with conceptions and perceptions. The small-scale practices of driving and riding are deeply intertwined in geographical imaginations of road space at large and small scales. As Warf (2008, 5) observed, "Experiences of time and space are ... heavily scale-dependent." A long route, for example, may be modern by the standards it was created, but vary greatly along the route given local differences in its topography, the road's maintenance history, and material development just beyond the roadway.

This dissertation upholds that road space involves a confluence of scales from the extremely local such as the body interactions with small stretches of road (Edensor 2003; Cresswell 2010) to the national (Merriman 2007). Scale is socially constructed (Marston 2000; Marston and Smith 2001). By portraying it as a social construction, Marston described scale as "a contingent outcome of the tensions that exist between structural forces and the practices of human agents" (Marston 2000, 6). In their influential article, "Human Geography Without Scale" Marston, Jones and Woodward (2005) find decades of studying scale so lacking they advocate eschewing the concept altogether. This dissertation acknowledges the social construction of scale, but prefers to consider roads as multi-scalar.

As I illustrate in this dissertation's empirical chapters, road space is materialized, imbued with meanings and practiced at multiple and intertwining scales. One way scales of road space are socially produced is through the cartographic scale of road maps. At smaller scales, the lack of detail presents relatively smooth and straight paths, and likely excludes smaller roads that may be locally important. At larger scales, curves may become more apparent, if the smaller roads are even included. A second way that scales of road space are produced is through conceptions and perceptions. As Swyngedouw (2004, 134) noted, "The condition of everyday life resides in the twin condition of the essential transformation of nature (place) on the one hand and the sociospatial relations through which this transformation is organized and controlled on the other." For example, a route may be conceived to connect distant places, but have serious flaws in its perceived, or practice along the route. A large pothole may strike the ire of a route's regular users, but draw little interest from those who consider the route as a connection between distant places. Similarly, connecting distant places may draw little interest from those who regularly travel a treacherous section of road on a regular basis. Therefore, to uncover the complexity of road space, it is important to explore the road's materiality, meaning and practice at multiple scales.

To explore scalar interactions, or the sociospatial relations between drivers and the materiality of road space, it is helpful to consider Hannam, Sheller and Urry's (2006) concept of moorings, "interdependent systems of 'immobile' material worlds" that permit mobilities to function are the stable materialities that facilitate movement. Citing Thrift (2004), Urry proclaims the car-driver and the roads they traverse as part of the "system of automobility" (2004). Although relatively stable, moorings require the ordering of

numerous complex geographical imaginaries to maintain their fixity (Edensor 2005; Graham and Thrift 2007). Moorings are material, but what they are maintained through the intertwining of meaning and practice. For example, Edensor notes that cars alone do not permit connectivity, but rather it emerges from a comprehensive system including “the paths, lanes, streets and routeways” (2004, 26). The transport network is not merely material, but also includes meaning and practice. Drawing on Urry (2004), Edensor included “humans, machines, roads and other spaces, representations, regulatory institutions and a host of related businesses and infrastructural features” among his factors that comprise the materiality, meaning and practice of automobility (2004, 102).

One manner in which moorings imbue meaning and influence practice is through spatial ordering. For example, Sheller and Urry (2000) and Urry (2004) include signs and cultures of mobility as means of ordering road space. Similarly, Edensor lists “regulatory institutions” (2004, 102) of ordering. Maintaining order promotes safety, but it also attempts to bring conceptions and perceptions of road space into congruence. According to Lefebvre’s (1991) *The Production of Space*, conceptions of space are envisioned by those with numerical forms of thought such as engineers and planners. Conceptions order space, but perceptions of space include space as it is practiced in everyday life. Conceptions and perceptions each involve meaning and materiality. Kinaesthetics, and embodiment more generally, are called upon frequently in debates over West Virginia’s development. This dissertation explores how kinaesthetics intersects geographical imagination as political tools of protest.

Mobilities and Rhythm: The Ordering and Practice of Road Space

A second concept that plays a key role in this dissertation is rhythm. In his book *Rhythmanalysis*, Lefebvre (2004) extolled the study of rhythm and the ways everyday rhythms are entangled with power. This dissertation draws heavily on Lefebvre's concept of rhythmanalysis as expressed by Edensor and Holloway (2008) and Edensor (2012), who contextualize rhythm as within discourses of mobility. Lefebvre noted "Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm" (2004, 15). Rhythm is material, meaningful and practiced. In their article "Rhythmanalysing the Coach Tour: The Ring of Kerry, Ireland," Edensor and Holloway (2008) explored how rhythm is employed to influence bus tourists' perceptions of place, space, and mobility. To explore geographical imaginations of road development, it is crucial to consider how rhythms were envisioned, promoted, and practiced. As this dissertation shows, discourses and contestation of road development frequently revolve around issues of rhythm. Some roads do not fit the speed, reliability or safety expectations of modern roads. In other instances, rhythms were debated in heated fights over routing as road boosters fought bitterly to guide traffic through their towns and cities. Ordering rhythm is a primary means of controlling road space. Ordering promotes acceptable rhythms that fit the conceptions of road space (Lefebvre 2004; Edensor and Holloway 2008; Edensor 2012). What constitutes acceptable rhythms involve interactions between the practice of road space and the meanings it is imbued with. Road development is influenced by numerous conceptions and perceptions of rhythm.

Ordered rhythms of road space often lead to normalized road practice (Edensor and Holloway 2008; Edensor 2003). As with other spaces, road space tends to fall into disorder

when it is not maintained. Rhythms are materially ordered and sustained through maintenance and repair (Graham and Thrift 2007). Amin and Thrift (2002) emphasize “nearly all networks look tighter than they actually are. All networks are held together by the activities of mediaries and intermediaries, armies of delegates which roam the networks, keeping them going. But, in fact, networks *do* often shatter and break down” (2002, 128 italics in original). Lefebvre (1991) noted that the social costs of cars and highway maintenance were contradictions of space, and not merely an inconsistency or dysfunction. “Owners of private cars,” he explained, “have a space at their disposition that costs them very little personally, although society collectively pays a very high price for its maintenance” (1991, 359). Conversely, badly maintained roads can provoke what Bissell (2010) referred to as “vibrating materialities.” The concept of vibration in mobility emphasizes that movement is not always smooth. In fact, even good roads have vibrations that comprise part of a road’s rhythm. Attitudes toward the ordering rhythm have varied historically, but can weigh heavily in the politics of road space.

As with all rhythms, the rhythms of road space involve not only movement, but also when it stops or slows (Lefebvre 2004). Friction is a necessary part of the politics of mobility (Cresswell 2010), for what slows or stops mobility is often as important as what facilitates it. Adey (2006) recognized that understanding immobility is crucial to understanding mobility. “If we are to take the ‘mobility turn’ seriously,” he suggested, academics should consider the “relations and differences between movements” (2006, 91). In this dissertation, for example, roads in different locations offered a wide variety of materialities and practices. In the 1920s and 1930s, when the period analyzed in this dissertation began, roads in southern West Virginia were terribly unreliable (chapters 5 and

6). Indeed, stopping is an integral part of mobility (Cresswell 2010; Salter 2013). Bissell's (2007) concept of animated suspension is also applicable for exploring issues detours, long waits in road construction, or automotive accidents. One means of ordering rhythms and movements of numerous actors is through surveillance (Lefebvre 1991; Foucault 1995), and road signs (Lefebvre 1991; Merriman 2004; Binnie et al. 2007; Edensor and Holloway 2008; Jones and Merriman 2009). Signs provide information to motorists as they promote consistent traffic patterns, safe speeds, and changes road space. Surveillance and signs demonstrate official conceptions of road space and rhythms and the geographical imaginations that influence them. During the 1950s, for example, the West Virginia Turnpike was lauded as exemplary of a new era in comfort and connectivity, but its critics lambasted the road as a dangerous two-lane turnpike (chapter 7).

Chapter 3

Modernity and Industrialization in West Virginia's Southern Coalfields:

Confronting Images of Isolation and Backwardness

Exploring historical and political geographies of road development offers a unique look at changing conceptualizations of modernity, for as Lewis (1993, 299) observed, “Even though the population of West Virginia is overwhelmingly rural, it is also overwhelmingly industrial, rather than agricultural.” Striving for modernity, road enthusiasts desired increased connectivity and the reliability of standardized roads to more conveniently navigate and connect the coalfields and its predominantly rural-industrial places. Conversely, some stereotypes portray West Virginians and other Appalachians as changeless and traditional “hill folk” in a pre-industrial society (Lewis 1993, 299). Road development is a fitting subject to contradict stereotypes for many who might otherwise know little of the Mountain State can appreciate the importance of reliable roads.

This chapter has three goals: First, I introduce the development of Appalachian stereotypes. Second, I discuss scholarly work that aims to confront negative stereotypes. Third, I illuminate southern West Virginia as a modern rural-industrial region by briefly reviewing railroad development in the state's southern coalfields during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Besides highlighting the establishment of industrial modernity in the coalfields, discussing railroads introduces significant places, power-geometries, and travel difficulties prior to the development of improved highways. Furthermore, railroads

crisscrossed southern West Virginia at nearly the same time that stereotypes portrayed Appalachia as backward and isolated.

A Brief Introduction to Negative Stereotypes of Appalachia

West Virginia and Appalachia have long been viewed as intrinsically “other” from the rest of the country (Billings, Norman, and Ledford 1999). Negative stereotypes of Appalachia rose to popularity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries through local color literature, a broad assortment of novels, short stories and verse that focused on peculiar regional characteristics that varied from the national popular culture. Lewis and Billings (1997, 11) consider local color writings “the most direct ancestors of modern stereotypes.” Appalachian local color writing contributed greatly to Appalachia’s image as a region distinct from the rest of America (Shapiro 1978), and tended to depict the region as romantic, backward and brutal. Local color writers depicted a strange and isolated region untouched by American civilization (Lewis and Billings 1997, 21). For example, in his 1873 *Lippencott’s Magazine* essay recounting a trip through eastern Kentucky, Will Wallace Harney created a lasting place image by labeling Appalachia “A Strange Land and a Peculiar People” (Harney 1873). From 1878 to 1886, Mary Noailles Murfree’s fictitious descriptions of Appalachia as “a land apart” were presented as ‘authentic’ despite having “little personal experience with” the region (Lewis and Billings 1997, 13). John Fox’s (1908) *Trail of the Lonesome Pine* and short stories in periodicals such as *Lippincott’s*, *Scribner’s*, and *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* promoted fanciful and negative portrayals at Appalachia’s expense (Shapiro 1978; Algeo 2003).

Stereotypes of violence and inbreeding continued into the 20th century and beyond. Perhaps the most notorious of the later examples are Dickey's *Deliverance* (1970) and the film adaptation (1972) directed by John Boorman. Both remain highly offensive with depictions of Appalachians as murderous rapists. Artistic works, such as novels and films, define places and solidify popular geographical imaginaries (Shortridge 1991; Aitken and Zonn 1994; Adams 2009). In the soundtrack for *Deliverance*, "Dueling Banjos" gained notoriety for equating Appalachia with violence, inbreeding and rape.

Confronting Appalachian Stereotypes

In recent years, scholars have attempted to rebut Appalachian stereotypes. Billings, Norman, and Ledford's (1999) edited book *Confronting Stereotypes* warns that ignoring Appalachian stereotypes simply prolongs them and implies an acceptance by way of silence. Eller (1982) refuted the stereotype that Appalachians are backwards and isolated by highlighting commercial ties between Appalachia and other parts of the country prior to industrialization in the late 19th century. Eller's *Uneven Ground* (2010) explores efforts to integrate West Virginia into the national economy after the Second World War. In southern West Virginia outside ties mushroomed with the influx of the coal industry in the 1880s. Fones-Wolf and Lewis's (2002) edited volume *Transnational West Virginia* highlights the state's ethnic diversity, including American born Blacks, Eastern and Central Europeans, and Italians. Lewis (1987) and Trotter (1990) elaborated further on the contributions of Blacks to southern West Virginia. Such works do not deal deeply with roads, but provide critical information on connectivity and the influences of diverse groups in the densely populated southern coalfields.

Railroads in the Coalfields: Modern Connective Precursors to Highways

As Lewis and Billings (1997, 29) contend, “It is ironic that at the height of local color writing at the turn of the century, Central Appalachia was about to reach a crescendo in an industrial transition which had been accelerating for decades.” During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, southern West Virginia underwent rapid change as railroads ushered in a boom in mining and timbering (Lewis 1993). In order to contextualize desires for modern highways, I review the earlier development of southern West Virginia’s three major railroads, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway (C&O), the Norfolk & Western Railway (N&W), and the Virginian Railway. Many of the commercial cities and coal towns examined in this dissertation were located along the railways. Moreover, the railroad companies played significant roles in the power-geometries of economic development and settlement patterns that set the stage for future highways. This section provides brief backgrounds on railroads and the connectivities and politics that existed prior to the surge of highway development in the 1920s.

The Chesapeake & Ohio Railway

The C&O Railway (now CSX Transportation) was the first major railroad in southern West Virginia, and instrumental in opening the New River and Winding Gulf coalfields (Tams 2001 [1963]; Frey Oct. 12, 2010). In 1869, the railway received an injection of capital and vision when Collis P. Huntington took control of the struggling line, and extended it west of its previous terminus of Covington, Virginia to a new town on the West Virginia side of the Ohio River (Frey Oct. 12, 2010). The C&O reached Huntington in 1873, and the route was to serve as a link in Huntington’s vision of a

transcontinental railroad stretching from Newport News to San Francisco (Eller 1982).

The C&O's presence stimulated a major construction boom in the coalfields (Eller 1982). By 1876, dozens of collieries opened along the line, but Huntington dismissed the profitability of coal haulage and chose not to develop branch lines deeper into the New River coalfields (Eller 1982). In 1888, Huntington sold his stake in the C&O, and by 1910 branch lines were extended to open mining development in the Kanawha and New River coalfields (Eller 1982; Tams 2001 [1963]). Notable coal towns such as Kaymoor and Thurmond flourished within the New River Gorge along the C&O line. The Fayette County population boomed from "6,647 in 1870 to 60,377 by 1920" (Athey 2013). By 1901, the C&O completed a connection "nearly to Beckley," the growing commercial and county seat of Raleigh County (Wood 2013). Beckley's location at southwestern corner of the New River coalfield and adjacent to the Winding Gulf coalfield proved influential in the city's development as a commercial service center. The Winding Gulf coalfield opened in 1907, and helped fuel Beckley's fortunes (Stafford 2013). As I explain below, the C&O would gain stiff competition from its longtime rival, the N&W Railway, as well as the upstart Virginian Railway.

The Norfolk & Western Railway

By the time the C&O opened the New River and Winding Gulf coalfields, northern investors such as Philadelphian, Frederick Kimball, had commenced development of the Pocahontas coalfields in the Flat Top Mountain region of southern West Virginia and southwest Virginia (Lambie 1954; Eller 1982). Unlike its competitor to the north, the N&W Railway (now Norfolk Southern) was created primarily to haul

coal. This fact was made all the more apparent when Kimball convinced N&W investors to form the Flat-top Coal Land Association (Lambie 1954), which obtained “300,000 acres, mostly in McDowell and Mercer counties” (Bailey 2013; see also Eller 1982). In 1901, the N&W purchased the Flat-top Coal Land Association and renamed it the Pocahontas Coal & Coke Company (Lambie 1954; Stanley 2012). It was renamed, yet again, in 1939 as the Pocahontas Land Corporation, a powerful enterprise that exists to this day (Bailey 2013). Along with the Crozer Land Company and the Beaver Coal Company, the Flat-top Coal Land Association and its successors were the principle landowners in southern West Virginia (Eller 1982; Stanley 2012). Lambie (1954, 39) observes, “By 1888 the Flat Top Coal Land Association and the Crozer interests owned the entire Pocahontas-Flat Top Region.” The land companies profited by leasing land to mine and timber operations, while the N&W profited from hauling the coal (Lambie 1954). Reiterating the importance of the land companies, Stanley (2012) notes there have been no changes “in the ownership of the majority of lands in the [Pocahontas] field” since the land titles were transferred to the N&W in 1901. The N&W and its landholding subsidiaries then have held a long and continuous presence in the economy, and culture of the Pocahontas coalfields.

In 1882, local and national and local power-geometries were set in motion when the N&W chose Bluefield as the headquarters of its Pocahontas Division. The city prospered as a commercial and industrial service center for the Pocahontas coalfield (McGehee 2013). In March 1883, the N&W finished its route into Pocahontas, Virginia and its first shipment of coal reached Norfolk that same month (Tams 2001 [1963]; Frey Oct 21, 2010). As McGehee (Oct 22, 2010) observed, development of the lucrative

“Pocahontas No. 3 seam transformed southern West Virginia, creating the cities of Bluefield, Bramwell, Keystone, Northfork, Kimball, Welch, and Gary, and numerous coal company towns.” The Pocahontas coalfield would be known locally as the “Billion Dollar” coalfield (Trotter 1990; Stanley 2012). Bramwell served as a significant financial center. Noting the town’s prominence, Hager (2013) observes that in its “heyday, passenger trains stopped 14 times a day.” As a financial center, Bramwell was rather notable for its numerous mansions, the residences of mine operators and other elites such as Isaac T. Mann, the president of the Pocahontas Fuel Company (Hager 2013; McGehee Oct 8, 2010).

The N&W’s expansion into the Pocahontas field eventually stalled until 1888 and the completion of the Elkhorn Tunnel, a passage through the rugged Flat Top Mountain in McDowell County (Frey Oct 21, 2010) toward Welch and the rest of the Pocahontas coalfields. Welch, a once booming commercial city on the N&W line, rests tucked within high ridges, and steep valleys at the junction of the Tug River and Elkhorn Creek (Gillenwater 2013). The McDowell County seat, Welch offered three hospitals, banking, retail goods, churches, and entertainment to the surrounding coal communities. While Bluefield was known as the “gateway to the Pocahontas coalfield” (Rice and Brown 1993, 185), Welch served coalfield communities within its immediate surroundings. The N&W traversed westward through the Pocahontas coalfield to the Williamson coalfield of Mingo and Wayne Counties on its way to Columbus and Cincinnati, Ohio (Tams 2001 [1963]; Frey Oct 21, 2010). Through the N&W, the southern coalfields were connected to Ohio to the west and Norfolk, Virginia to the east.

The Virginian Railway

The final railroad to enter West Virginia's southern coalfields was the Virginian Railway. Established in 1907 and completed in 1909, the Virginian connected Deepwater, (also Deep Water) West Virginia on the Kanawha River to Sewell's Point, Virginia near Norfolk. The Virginian opened much of the Winding Gulf coalfield to development a region that had not been exploited by the C&O and N&W lines (Dixon 2010; Lily 2012). Financed by Henry H. Rogers, of Standard Oil fame, the Virginian was envisioned as a direct route from the coalfields of West Virginia to the Virginia shore, and combined the Deepwater Railway in the New River region with Tidewater Railway in Virginia. Rogers and William Page, an early coal operator in the New River region, had cooperated in financing the Deepwater Railway. As Tams (2001 [1963]) explains, the original plan of the venture involved creating a short-haul line that would access long-distance markets via either the C&O or the N&W. Rogers grew furious, however, when the both railways refused to give the Deepwater a pro-rated cost on its coal traffic (Tams 2001 [1963], 21). Rogers anonymously financed the connection of the Deepwater to the Tidewater with \$30 million of his own fortune (Lilly 2012) and his role was kept nearly secret until it was incorporated in 1907 (Archer 2007). The Tidewater expanded westward toward West Virginia as the Tidewater Railway, but when it was nearly complete Rogers merged the Deepwater and Tidewater to become the Virginian Railway (Tams 2001 [1963]; Archer 2007).

The Virginian's purpose as a direct route was implemented by the construction of numerous bridges and tunnels to make it as straight as possible (West Virginia Writers Program 1941, 107). The railroad also made use of some of the largest locomotives in the

country and carried the “world’s longest and heaviest coal trains” (Lilly 2012). Despite connecting only several large commercial centers, the Virginian played a critical role in exploiting the Winding Gulf coalfield. Mining towns served by the Virginian included Page, owned by Roger’s partner William Page; Itmann, named after Isaac T. Mann; and Wyco, owned by William W.P. Tams. On its way southward from Deepwater, the line passed the town of Mullens on its way southward to Princeton where it veered eastward through Virginia.

It is worth noting that the cities and coal towns served by the Virginian do not play significant roles in this dissertation’s exploration of road development. Nevertheless, the Virginian offers much to contextualize a study of the historical and political geographies of highway development. First, it illustrates the booming and competitive industrial economies of the southern coalfields during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Second, it highlights the difficulty of north-south travel through southern West Virginia. Deepwater is a short distance from Kanawha Falls and Cotton Hill Mountain, sites that played critical roles in West Virginia’s north-south highway development.

Roads in West Virginia Literature: Connectivity and the Evolution Roads

In his semi-autobiographical history of the early coal mining in southern West Virginia, William Purviance “W.P.” Tams, Jr. (2001 [1963]) recalled southern West Virginia’s treacherous travel conditions during the early 20th century. Tams, a pioneer coal operator in the Winding Gulf coalfield, described his first trip from Mt. Hope to Beckley in 1905. He explained that by horseback the journey “took three hours to cover

the eleven miles of road” (Tams 2001, 53 [1963]). He also observed that travel from the Fayette County coal town of MacDonald to Bluefield required an extensive journey by rail taking an “early morning” branch line to Thurmond, the C&O mainline to Huntington, boarding a small train to Kenova, and then traveling the Norfolk & Western Railway (N&W) to Bluefield. What would take a mere two hour car ride in the early 1960s required “nearly two days” of travel at the turn of the century (Tams, 2001, 54 [1963]).

At the dawn of the 20th century, southern West Virginia was not the isolated and backwards region portrayed by Appalachian stereotypes. Despite relatively inconvenient travel conditions, southern West Virginia was interconnected by rail and to a lesser degree by road. Beginning in the 1920s, road development expanded greatly. In the chapters that follow, this dissertation illustrates that southern West Virginia was also connected by the geographical imaginations of road enthusiasts who valued the economic, cultural, and social potentials of improving roadways. Because I depend greatly on newspapers for information, this dissertation focuses primarily on the geographical imaginations of elites such as politicians, business leaders, and journalists. It is important to acknowledge that elite’s travel experiences likely differed greatly from the typical working-class residents of southern West Virginia.

During early decades of the 20th century few people owned automobiles, but roads were nonetheless an integral part of the development of southern West Virginia. Trotter (1990), for example, noted that Blacks contributed greatly to the construction of southern West Virginia’s early roadways through their forced labor. The region, he explained, “had the highest rate of prohibition arrests, convictions, and sentences to hard labor on

county roads” (Trotter 1990, 134). Wilkinson’s (2011) *Big Band Jazz in Black West Virginia, 1930–1942* explores the thriving Black pop culture in southern West Virginia facilitated through the development of roads. Each of these works illustrates that West Virginia’s road development did not form apart from the social, cultural and commercial connections beyond the state’s borders.

This dissertation explores the modernity of roads, but it is also important to acknowledge that the region was dotted with mountain homesteads that were reachable by dirt road, but inaccessible by car (Giardina 1994, 68). In her historical novel, *The Unquiet Earth*, Denise Giardina (1994) notes the often-harrowing practice of driving southern West Virginia’s narrow, winding roads through the 1930s to 1980s. Despite the relative connectivity of roads, rough topography and physical remoteness made mobility difficult for many. In *The Unquiet Earth* (1994) the comical yet resourceful character Toejam Day urges politicians to build a car bridge over a creek to connect his neighborhood to the main road. A flood, unfortunately common in southern West Virginia, destroyed the bridge. Characters waded the creek or hiked around it to access the main road. As Giardina (1994) described, many students had to walk long distances to catch their school busses.

Adda Leah Davis’s novel *Lucinda’s Mountain* (2007) centers on Lucinda, a young woman in West Virginia’s southern coalfields who aspires to better herself with a college education during the 1950s. Lucinda meets Jason, the new doctor for the mining town of Bradshaw. On a slender, muddy, mountain road Jason nearly runs her over. As the novel unfolds, Davis describes how Jason’s automobile provides him an ease of mobility that Lucinda lacks. After enrolling in college Lucinda makes regular bus trips

between school in Mercer County and her home in McDowell. Giardina and Davis both grew up in West Virginia's southern coalfields and likely experienced the difficulties of travel along its tortuous highways.

Roads likewise played a role in Homer Hickman's memoir *Rocket Boys* (1998). Also known as *October Sky*, Hickam describes life during the 1950s in Coalwood, a model company town in McDowell County. Inspired by the launching of Sputnik, Hickam recalls his efforts and a group of high school classmates, the "Rocket Boys," to build and launch model rockets. The son of the mine's superintendent, Hickam had privileges many lacked including a car he shared with his older brother. Hickam recalls driving and riding around meandering, potholed, mountain roads including trips to Welch, Big Creek High School, and nearby towns such as English and Caretta.

Hickam deftly describes an acute sense of place, and the daily life of traveling the region's mountainous roads, even recounting the number of curves along specific stretches of road, their conditions, and events that took place there. A notable example occurred on a snowy morning journey by school bus over Coalwood Mountain when, for safety's sake, the bus driver ordered the children to exit the bus and walk around an icy, narrow curve. Recalling the event, Hickam (1992, 196) explains, "The fifth curve up was especially precarious. It canted toward a one-hundred-foot-high precipice without even a tree to slow the bus down if it went over." After re-boarding the bus, they continued up Coalwood Mountain where they "were faced with a steep, straight stretch followed by a series of curves that dipped and turned" (Hickam 1992, 196). Later, while on the same trip, the kids walked around another "treacherous curve" (Hickam 1992, 196) on War Mountain.

I have provided just a few examples of mobility and roads in southern West Virginia. Railroad development and road development each illustrate the region's modernity. Despite stereotypes to the contrary, the region was not isolated and insular. History and literature describe longings for connectivity. In the next chapter, I describe my methods for exploring such discourse through newspapers.

Chapter 4

Methods to Explore Geographical Imaginations

of West Virginia's Road Development

To examine geographical imaginations of road development, this dissertation explores the discourse of roads in newspapers throughout the 1920s to the 1970s. Newspapers provide a rich source of information on visions and debates of road development including updates on road construction, contested development, calls for improvements, discourse on and from major political actors and road enthusiasts, as well as views on how road development affect places. I chose newspapers as a source of information for two reasons. First, they are ubiquitous and cover numerous aspects of everyday life. I surmised that since if bad roads were a frequent topic of news in southern West Virginia in more recent years, they were more than likely a recurrent journalistic theme when road development increased beginning in the 1920s. This dissertation proved that supposition correct. Second, newspapers have often been cited as a means to gauge geographical imaginations. In his seminal essay "Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography," J.K. Wright (1947) considered newspapers a valuable source of peripheral geographical knowledge to compliment more formal study. Adapting Wright's concept of geosophy into a "critical geosophy," Cresswell (2001, 2006, 2011) described newspapers as rich in discourse on geographical imaginations of mobility. Political geographers have also examined newspapers for nationalist and regional rhetoric. Newman and Paasi (1998), for example, included newspapers as a source of discourse on evolving views and contests of state borders.

Bialasiewicz et al. (2007) examined news reports, including White House press releases, to study how geographical imaginations shape geopolitics in the so-called “War on Terror.” They argued that the discourses of US strategy divulged in news reports were an actual performance of the war and created the “effects that they name[d]” (Bialasiewicz et al. 2007, 405).

This dissertation does not go as far as to evaluate newspapers as performance, but they nevertheless provide a rich source of political discourse. I maintain that demands for new roads, promoting advantageous routes, and contesting poorly maintained roads influenced the materiality, meaning and practice of roads. Rather than focus on newspapers as performance, this dissertation follows Paasi’s (2002) contention that “newspaper discourses can promote ‘regional’ feelings and ways of thought” (143). News reports compared and contrasted roads in various places through discourse of how roads influenced modernity or backwardness.

In what follows, I describe some of the primary West Virginia newspapers that I used to gather information on visions and debates of road development. I then introduce some of key research features of newspaperarchive.com, this dissertation’s predominant source of newspaper articles. I then go on to describe the research process, including how I established the Lakes-to-Florida Route and the push for north-south road space as this dissertation’s principal topics. Finally, I describe some of the challenges I encountered, and the ways that I overcame those issues through my methods of using the website newspaperarchive.com and collecting and analyzing the material.

West Virginian Newspapers

The majority of the research materials for this dissertation is drawn from three West Virginian newspapers, the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, the *Charleston Gazette*, and the *Charleston Daily Mail* between the 1920s and 1970s. Each is still in publication under various changes of ownership. Papers from Beckley, West Virginia played a secondary role in my research, including the *Raleigh Register*, the *Post-Herald*, and the combined *Beckley Post-Herald The Raleigh Register*. Collectively, these sources provided valuable information on road development, and a relatively ideologically balanced discourse on visions and debates of road space. The *Gazette* and *Register* were both ideologically Democrat (Adams 2013; Smith 2013). The *Post-Herald* developed from a merger between the Republican-leaning *Raleigh Herald* and the *Evening Post* (Smith e-wv 2013). The *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Telegraph* were Republican-leaning. The Shott family published the *Daily Telegraph* from 1896 to 1985 (Archer e-wv 2013). Ike Shott, the family patriarch, served as a Republican in both Congress and the Senate. Archer (e-wv 2013) explained that Ike Shott played a hands-on role in the paper as he personally “wrote and set the type” for his editorials in the paper’s ubiquitous front-page “Good Morning” section.

Besides providing an ideological balance, the newspapers also offered a geographical balance. Charleston, Bluefield and Beckley are situated along the highways examined in this dissertation. For example, US Routes 19 and 21, the West Virginia Turnpike, and Interstate 77 each linked Bluefield, Beckley and Charleston. News and discourse regarding those routes were relevant to the papers and the regions they served. The *Gazette*, and the *Daily Mail* were significant as newspapers in West Virginia’s

capital city. Each had a fairly large coverage area including the southern coalfields region. For more specific coverage of road development, the *Daily Telegraph* was useful for studying the development of US Route 52 and the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway. US 52 and the routes that preceded it connected Bluefield to the coalfields. The *Daily Telegraph* was also useful as a significant source of coverage on Virginia's road politics, including the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway and US 21. Likewise, Beckley's location proved significant in that it is nearly halfway between Bluefield and Charleston. Given the city's central location, the *Raleigh Register*, *Beckley Post-Herald*, and *Beckley Post-Herald* The *Raleigh Register* were particularly useful for information and discourse on the West Virginia Turnpike. This geographical balance permitted the uncovering of local contests that were not covered in the other papers.

The Dearth of Multiple Perspectives in Newspapers

Despite my efforts to provide a geographical balance in the news coverage of West Virginia's road development, it is important to keep in mind despite aims or claims to present news objectively, newspapers are not inherently unbiased. Scholars of journalism history have long debated the meaning and degree of journalistic objectivity (Dicken-Garcia 2008). As Schiller (2011, 438) explains, "Social conflicts have been disguised, contained, and displaced through the imposition of news objectivity, a framework legitimating the exercise of social power over the interpretation of reality." West Virginia's newspapers are no exception. In his book *An Appalachian New Deal*, Thomas (1998) points out that Republicans controlled most West Virginia newspapers. He notes that "of twenty-nine daily newspapers, only eleven were nominally Democrat,

and in Bluefield, Beckley and Clarksburg, Republican owners published both Republican and Democratic dailies” (Thomas 1998, 25). As Thomas (1998, 7) observes, during the 1920s before the Great Depression Republicans were quite likely to support improvements to infrastructure, “The size and cost of government grew substantially as the probusiness Republican regime of the twenties, more inclined to neo-mercantilism than laissez faire, provided more public services such as building, maintaining, and policing a system of highways.”

It is important to present a variety of voices when exploring geographical imaginations, and early in this dissertation’s research I intended to include much on the racial and gendered aspects of road development. I soon learned, however, that the newspapers presented significant challenges to presenting multiple voices. Articles and editorials on roads largely described discourses of white, male elites. A potential insight into women’s vision of road development surfaced through the news and notes of the Bluefield (WV) Auto Club published in the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*. The organization was an affiliate of the American Automobile Association (AAA). Pearle A. Brammer served as the club’s editor. As a woman writing on the use and development of roads her voice could have lent valuable discourse on women and roads. Unfortunately, there was little discussion of women or personal insights in her news and notes supplements. Moreover, the pages covered many aspects of road culture such as information on travel and technological advancements in automobility, and dealt little with the specific roads discussed in this dissertation.

I had also hoped to explore the influence of African Americans in the creation of southern West Virginia’s roads. Blacks played significant roles in southern West

Virginian coal mining. The town of Keystone, along became US Route 52, was a lively and predominantly black community, but its leaders were rarely mentioned in news accounts on road development. I learned that Keystone was well represented in several meetings and protests over the construction road space, but did not uncover the contributions of its African American elites to road development. Another racial issue that surfaced is the use of convict labor in southern West Virginia to construct roads. I discovered articles and editorials from the 1920s and 1930s but found little on the use of prison labor on the roads examined in this dissertation. Despite the relative lack of alternative voices provided by the newspapers, they were nevertheless valuable to uncover geographical imaginations of road development.

Heritage Archives and Newspaperarchive.com

In this section, I describe newspaperarchive.com, the source of the vast majority of the newspaper articles examined and cited in this dissertation. Heritage Archives runs newspaperarchive.com, a database of “130+ million pages” (Heritage Archives 2014). The archive includes papers from all 50 US states and 10 additional countries (Heritage Archives 2014). Heritage Archives claims that “NewspaperARCHIVE.com [is] the largest historical newspaper database online” (Heritage Archives 2014). My choice of newspapers depended largely on their availability within the archive and because they were pertinent to the research. The archive’s growth became apparent throughout my research. For example, during my initial research in May 2012 the database lacked the following years of the *Daily Telegraph*: 1906-1911; 1918-1923; 1941-1945; 1949-1961; June 1962-1969; 1972. Except for the few examples above, this list does not include

months and individual days. By June 2013, 1960 and 1961 were included. The frequent additions made it difficult to establish when some years were added. Despite such gaps there was ample material to work with from the *Daily Telegraph*. Many of the dates throughout the years 1924 through the 1930s were available. These were the predominant years studied in chapters 5 and 6. The lack of 1940s material in the *Daily Telegraph* did not prove troublesome. Searches through the *Gazette* and *the Daily Mail* indicated a lack of highway development, a situation I attribute to the Second World War. For material on the West Virginia Turnpike and Interstate Highway System (chapter 7), the lack of *Daily Telegraphs* in the 1950s and 1960s was eased by the abundance of material in the *Gazette* and *the Daily Mail*. The *Gazette* and the *Daily Telegraph* were available in the database with few interruptions between 1914 to 1977 and 1924 to 1977 respectively. The *Southwest Times* (Pulaski, VA), and the *News Journal* (Radford, VA) covered the fight to route I-77 through the Virginias by providing an opposing voice to the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association.

Gathering and selecting source material was difficult and time-consuming, but relatively simple compared to traditional archival research. The subscription fee permitted me access 24 hours per day, and saved the time and expense of copying. The time to explore the material without the consideration of an archivist's schedule benefitted this dissertation greatly. It is not an exaggeration to state that without the Heritage Archive's database, or a comparable electronic archive, it would have been impossible to conduct research on highways and names with which I was previously unfamiliar. The website's search tools allow me to search for keywords, and to limit searches according to country, state, and city or by individual newspaper. Searches could

also be conducted by specific dates, between specific dates, or between particular years. The majority of my searches were conducted by narrowing the search to West Virginia newspapers, or to individual cities and papers. This made browsing and selecting articles much more feasible than a tradition brick and mortar archive. By making it relatively simple to search between multiple newspapers and to search for news on specific places, people, and roadways, it provided flexibility to explore road issues at a variety of scales. As I will explain in more detail below, it is ability to follow up on leads and story lines that makes newspaperarchive.com such a valuable tool for multi-scalar research.

Search results are listed in groups of 10, 20, or 30 items and can be sorted according to “Relevancy,” “Newest First,” or “Oldest First.” Relevancy allows one to see a mixture of results that the website’s algorithm determines. This option was useful for getting a quick glimpse of the results. I found the Oldest First option the most helpful because it allowed me to follow the chronological progression of particular issues. Regardless of the sorting option, the list includes a thumbnail image of each page in the list, and roughly four to six lines of the text with the searched terms highlighted (Figure 4.1). The thumbnail images expedited the discovery of maps, and the recognition of pages I had previously worked on when it was necessary to review articles. The text was useful as a means of excluding business addresses, advertisements, and accident reports that were less pertinent to the research. Each search provides the number of newspaper pages that the particular word or phrase was found. At times this involved occasions when an article continued onto another page. When search results displayed two or more items from the same newspaper on the same date, it usually indicated an article continued

on another page in the newspaper. Less frequently, it involved multiple articles on the same topic within the same edition.

59 Results for: lakes florida highway from 1924 - 1926, published in Charleston, West Virginia

Country: USA ✕ State: West Virginia ✕ City: Charleston ✕

Between Years: 1924 - 1926 ✕

New Search Revise your Search Save Search

Showing 1-30 Sorted by Relevancy Newest First Oldest First

Charleston Gazette
Sunday, September 20, 1925, Charleston, West Virginia

.... Through Charleston also runs the Lakes to' Florida highway. It extends from the great Lakes on... from Washington to Golden Gate LAKES-TO-FLORIDA ROAD CROSSES HERE Highway Systems of This Section... will be the great- est highway of the nation. Through Charleston also runs the Lakes to...

City: Charleston Date: Sun, Sep 20, 1925
State: West Virginia Year: 1925
Country: USA Decade: 1920's

Save Result Don't Show Me Again

Charleston Daily Mail
Sunday, August 10, 1924, Charleston, West Virginia

...Road Session WTTHEVILLE, Va., .Aug. Lakes-to-Florida Highway association, was organized at a meeting held... Charlotte, N. v C. The highway begins at Jackson- ville, Florida, thence, to Savannah, Ga.; Columbia... The various links of this highway system are practically, completed from the Great to Florida. Thoro...

City: Charleston Date: Sun, Aug 10, 1924
State: West Virginia Year: 1924
Country: USA Decade: 1920's

Refine your Results

Narrow Locations Refine Search

Country: USA ✕

State: West Virginia ✕

City: Charleston ✕

Charleston Daily Mail (30)
 Charleston Gazette (29)

Narrow Dates Refine Search

Between Years: 1924 - 1926 ✕

My Recent Searches

bramwell ✕
Exact Date: November 1, 1896

beckwith cotton hill station ✕

beckwith cotton hill station ✕

cotton hill road highway ✕
Between Years: 1920 - 1929

cotton hill road highway ✕

Figure 4.1 Screenshot of Search from newspaperarchive.com (accessed October 4, 2014).

Based on these numbers I conservatively estimate that I scrolled through approximately 300,000 results during my research. I base this estimation on numerous occasions that searches included thousands of results. I saved a fraction of these and

even fewer were used in this dissertation. It was by using a searchable electronic archive that I could consider so many items. It was tedious and laborious work, but much easier than a traditional archive.

Keyword and Phrase Searches

The search features of newspaperarchive.com include a variety of tools for broadening and narrowing keyword searches. Keyword options include *With all the words*, whereby each term is considered separately, or *With the exact phrase*, whereby the particular phrase is searched. For example, searching “Great Lakes to Florida Highway” in the *exact phrase* function provides the pages with that specific highway. Searching for the keywords “Florida,” “highways,” and “lakes” in the *With all of the words* option, however, would include mentions of Florida, highways, and lakes results pages where each word is included, but in no particular order. Some of the more productive *exact phrase* searches of particular routes included “Tug River Highway,” “State Route 8,” “Route No. Four,” “Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway,” “Lakes to Florida Highway,” “Cotton Hill,” “Simmons Mountain Road,” “US Route 52,” “US Route 21,” and “US 19 21.” For searches involving numbers, exact phrase searches were crucial to avoid a deluge of material with numbers including dates, page numbers, or monetary matters.

The *With all of the words* option was occasionally useful by itself to find articles where alternate names were used. For example, searching “Lakes,” “Florida,” and “Highway” in the *With all of the words* option provided results of the “Lakes to Florida Highway” in instances when the word “Great” was excluded from the Great Lakes-to-

Florida Highway. Likewise, the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway was often simply referred to as “the Lakes to Florida Route” (*Charleston Gazette*, Aug. 18, 1925). This example was typical of searches for articles on the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway since it was rarely listed under that name. In the article above, the word “Marietta” was a clue to verify it as the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway. The mention of Asheville and Parkersburg were also helpful since the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway pass through those cities. Asheville, NC was a particularly important indicator, since it was the home city of its founders. The frequent lack of a formal name for the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway made searching for news, and differentiating it from the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway quite difficult and reiterated the importance of actually reading the material. In other articles about the auto trails, mention of cities it connected helped to distinguish it.

Combining the *With the exact phrase* option with the *With all the words* option was often helpful to uncover more details of particular story-lines. For example, searching “West Virginia Turnpike” as an exact phrase and the keyword “Charleston” provided results on Bluefield-related turnpike issues. It was still necessary to exclude material such as mentions of addresses or auto accidents, but such combined searches narrowed material considerably. This was particularly useful when a story-line emerged and required follow up. For example, when I learned there was a heated dispute between a prominent bus line and taxi drivers in Welch, West Virginia during the early 1920s entering the exact phrase “consolidated bus lines” and the keywords “welch, taxi” helped to facilitate the search for information. After learning about a 1920s controversy between a prominent bus line and taxi drivers in McDowell County, I was able to follow up on the

story. I discuss this fight for road space in chapter 6. In general, such combined searches were quite useful for digging up information on the small-scale stories and controversies that would easily get overlooked if searches were limited to the names of highways.

The Research Process Using Newspaperarchive.com

In this section, I discuss my research method of searching broadly for road development stories. In the initial stages of research, I was aware of only a few of the roads and keywords listed above. I had not yet discovered the routes that would form the basis of this dissertation. When I was raised in West Virginia in the 1970s and later, West Virginia's section of US 21 had long been deactivated and divided among a number of roads, including I-77. I was unaware of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway or its longstanding association. I had ridden and driven US Route 52, Interstate 77 and the West Virginia Turnpike, but knew little of their early development histories. I expected to uncover historical and political geographies of their development, but searching them as terms was not helpful in my initial research on the early development of the region's highways. Moreover, I did not want this dissertation to focus exclusively on US 52 or I-77, and had not considered the West Virginia Turnpike as a topic interest. However, as geographical imaginations of north-south road space began to take precedence, it became clear that the early highways I was exploring were the predecessors of US 52, I-77 and the West Virginia Turnpike.

Since I could not simply build on my limited knowledge of the region's highway development, I decided a broad approach was the most feasible way to discover the region's early road development. I began by searching for stories of West Virginia's

historical and political geographies of road development that highlighted the multi-scalar nature of geographical imagination. Given my limited knowledge of highway development, I chose the familiar counties McDowell and Mercer for my initial searches in the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*. My familiarity with the place names and physical topography of the region helped me make sense of the reports, and appreciate historical frustrations of inadequate roads, and hopes for modern roads. Although I have not driven or ridden under the same circumstances as 1920s motorists, I have spent untold hours traveling between many of the towns and cities described in this dissertation. Discerning route changes was difficult, but familiarity with the current routes and the surrounding landscapes aided my efforts. I have spent much of my life traveling US Route 52 between Welch and Bluefield, and it influenced my geographical imagination at both a personal level and in my scholarly concerns for the politics of road space.

Beginning the Search with Two Broad Keywords

Since I did not know the names of early West Virginia roads or their politics, I began with the keywords “road” and “highway”. Searching these terms in all West Virginia newspapers proved difficult due to their prevalence as business addresses and reports of automobile accidents numerous roads. When attempting to search for these terms in the *Charleston Gazette* and the *Charleston Daily Mail* was also troublesome given Charleston’s size and its far-reaching coverage. My research became bogged down by numerous reports and mentions of small roads and streets. To direct attention to larger roads, I decided to begin my search in the more familiar territory of the Bluefield and McDowell coalfields region. To accomplish this, I searched the exact phrases “state

road” and “state route” in 1920s issues of the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*. This method worked. Unlike the search in Charleston papers, I was able to discern more significant highways from the city streets and minor roads. News of state road development in the *Daily Telegraph* provided necessary background knowledge on West Virginia’s highways and hopes for development. Through this method news on State Routes No. 8 and 4, the Tug River Highway and endeavors for a route to Florida surfaced. With a sense that The Tug River Highway (State Route No. 8) and State Route No. 4 were viewed as important long-distance roads, I then looked for more specific news in Charleston and Beckley papers in the 1920s. By using a broad search in a familiar region, and following up on State Routes No. 8 and 4, the Tug River Highway and endeavors for a route to Florida in the other papers, I established the routes that formed the basis of chapters 5 and 6, and preceded the West Virginia Turnpike discussed in chapter 7.

Research Obstacles and Solutions

This section discusses problems I encountered in my research and solutions that proved helpful to work around them. One key challenge that proved difficult and time-consuming was discerning the routing of highways. Some challenges involved routes that were in initial stages of development, or took years to complete. Other difficulties concerned the fact that new routes often traversed previous highways. For example, the Tug River Highway, State Route No. 8, and US 52 were essentially the same route, but with important route changes. Comparing the current US 52 on Google Maps to the 1924 Bramwell (WV), Welch (WV), and Bluefield (WV) quadrangle helped me to distinguish

where the route differed from the previous routes. The Bramwell quadrangle was useful for discerning the route of the loathed, Simmons Mountain road that was bypassed by the development of US 52. Both quadrangles are available online through the University of Texas's "Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection" at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/topo/west_virginia/. Besides simply differentiating routes, the maps were crucial to visualizing the roads and their relationships and connectivities. A 1928 quadrangle map of Fayetteville (WV), and 1929 quadrangle maps of Beckley (WV), and Flat Top (WV) available through that same map archive were invaluable as a means to visualize the development of U.S 21, and important route changes. The Fayetteville map was particularly vital since it was in that region near Kanawha Falls and Gauley Bridge that multiple north-south roads converged. Besides quadrangle maps, contemporary maps published in newspapers, road maps of the 1920s and 1930s, and 1940 US Census maps of McDowell, Mercer and Fayette counties available online at <http://research.archives.gov> were also quite helpful in visualizing and differentiating routes.

Besides maps, a second means of visualizing development was through historical photographs. The collection at West Virginia University's "West Virginia History on View: Photographs from the West Virginia and Regional History Collection" at <http://wvhistoryonview.org/> provided numerous photographs on US 21, US 52, and the West Virginia Turnpike. A second collection, the "Norfolk & Western Historical Photograph Collection" available at http://imagebase.lib.vt.edu/browse.php?folio_ID=/trans/nss through Virginia Tech's online "ImageBase." The Norfolk & Western images proved useful for early

development of US 52, a route that nearly followed the Norfolk & Western Railway (now Norfolk Southern) through the coalfield of McDowell. Besides enabling me to see highway development projects when they were new, the photographs in both collections lent a sense of celebrating modernity. The photographs also offered valuable reassurance that projects, and controversies I explored in my research were indeed significant.

Another means of untangling routes and their discourse was by noticing the recurrence of themes in multiple newspapers. Along with the maps and images I discussed above, this served as a way to triangulate the importance of issues. Throughout the research process I was quite cautious in trusting facts presented in newspapers. For example, when I first read of endeavors to create a route to Florida, I was uncertain if it was simply a boosting stunt to promote tourism, or if it was actually a planned and promoted as a highway. I learned later that it was a mixture of both and that it was certainly important to West Virginia's road development history. Multiple sources were crucial to uncover its importance since discourses were challenged and plans changed. Ultimately, untangling the politics of road development helped to differentiate the routes. Political contests over the shared space of State Route No. 4 and US Routes 19 and 21 provided the material that helped to distinguish them.

As Weingroff (USDOT 2013 a) observed, the difficulties of navigating roads with shared names and coterminous road space were among the motivations to create the more orderly US Highway System. If named auto trails were bewildering to travelers, they can be all the more confusing to one trying to follow their histories. My initial discovery and follow-up of endeavors to create a Lakes-to-Florida route were confusing given that what seemed to be one or as many as three or four routes were actually two distinct auto trails,

the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway and the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway. Each connected the Great Lakes to Florida, and passed through Bluefield. Likewise, each was conceived in North Carolina, and formed within a month of each other in 1924. In due course I realized that they were separate road spaces. Maps of the routes and careful attention to newspaper articles eventually allowed me to differentiate the two. US Routes 19 and 21 developed partially out of these two visions for auto trails, and traversed portions of both. Indeed, throughout the research for this dissertation one of the most difficult aspects of analysis was discerning which individuals, groups, cities and other entities supported which plan. Within a matter of years between 1923 and 1926 efforts to establish State Routes, named routes to Florida, and US Highways became intertwined, making unraveling their politics all the more challenging.

To untangle these visions of road space, I used a variety of published sources. This was necessary to provide background information, but also as a means of verifying the information provided in newspapers. US Highway maps, road maps and highway histories including Weingroff's essays on road development for the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) were quite helpful. Weingroff serves as an Information Liaison Specialist with the Federal Highway Administration and his unofficial histories are published online at The Federal Highway Administration's "Highway History" website at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/infrastructure/history.cfm>. Other highway histories such as Seely's (1987) book the creation of the US Highway System, and Swift's (2012) broad history US Highways and the Interstate Highway System, were also helpful in providing needed background information. Few of them, however, provided much on the highways examined in this dissertation. An amateur online history of the US Highway System

entitled “US Highways From US 1 to US 830” by Robert V. Droz at <http://www.us-highways.com> also proved useful for learning the termini and establishing timelines of subsequent extensions of the US Routes discussed in this dissertation. I approached this resource cautiously and used it as a starting point and corroborated it with more trustworthy sources such as the USDOT histories and newspaper updates on highway development.

Notes and Analysis

This section discusses the tools that I used to read, organize, and analyze the news articles. My primary method of storing and reading news articles was in the PDF format and searching for key words and phrases. Searchable PDF files made finding the needed article relatively easy. Since newspaperarchive.com produces pages rather than the specific article, I often need to find the desired article on the page by searching for the key phrases, such as “road,” “highway,” “Florida,” or “interstate.” This same method also made re-reading articles and highlighting important passages fairly simple. Throughout the research process when important topics emerged I organized the saved the articles through a combination of topic and chronology. I copied quotations in Microsoft Word documents, and categorized them by date and subject. It was from these categories that I developed the subsections of chapters 5 and 6 of this dissertation.

At first, my research on the West Virginia Turnpike and Interstate 77 (chapter 7) seemed more straightforward than the previous empirical chapters, but it presented challenges of its own. I researched and wrote it after the previous empirical chapters, and knew that it would involve the turnpike and interstate. Since both exist today, their

routes were easy to establish, but I knew little of their histories or the primary contests in development. Frequently reading and organizing the news articles by date and subject helped to reveal that the turnpike was highly contested as a backward and dangerous highway. This work also revealed that the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association played a significant role in routing I-77 through Virginia. Categorizing quotations and PDFs by date and topic helped untangle the heated politics of the turnpike and I-77 by allowing me to discern which group favored which particular route, much material I had on each, and helped to maintain a timeline of events and determine which proposals were accepted and which were eschewed.

For each of the three empirical chapters, my research involved frequent cycles of reading, highlighting, word searching, and re-reading. From there I highlighted and noted comments or questions, and followed up with further readings that I collected or found on newspaperarchive.com. Highlighting allowed me to establish time lines of the discourses of events surrounding those topics. By sorting dates and topics, I was able to discern proposed routings from the final routings. It also allowed me to explore the roles of some road enthusiasts, and the contestation of routes. Keyword searches using the “find” function with PDF files made it rather simple to find names of road enthusiasts, cities and prominent issues. For example, after reading of Roscoe Marvel or Cotton Hill several times, I understood that they played significant roles in road development, but it was only after numerous readings that I learned their contributions to the story and how they fit into the discourse. Searching PDF files facilitated such readings and re-readings.

Conclusion

The broad research method that I employed built upon the familiar and progressed toward the unfamiliar to uncover geographical imaginations of road development at scales small and large. I began cautiously and at times suspiciously, but through careful reading and re-reading I recognized visions and debates of modern road space. My broad approach revealed the common thread of the Lakes-to-Florida imaginary, the biggest surprise of my research. The greatest success of my methods was in allowing me to explore the intertwining of large-scale imaginaries and the small-scale materialities, meanings and practices of West Virginia's road development from narrow winding roads, to auto-trails, US Highways, a turnpike, and the Interstate Highway System.

Chapter 5

West Virginia and the Fight for a Through Route to Florida

Roads play significant roles in American geographical imaginations, but few understand their complex historical and political geographies. Politics, scale, and geographical imagination are integral to the process of boosting and building roads. In recent years geographers have encouraged research on past mobilities including road space. In a discussion of his concept of place, Cresswell (2009) suggested that it consists of materiality, meaning and practice. This dissertation shows that the same framework applies to the production of road space. In his work on the vision, construction and consumption of the M-1 Motorway in England, Merriman (2004, 2005, 2007) explained that the production of road space is political and multi-scalar. Merriman's work highlights the importance of examining the history and culture of road space.

This chapter explores efforts to link the Great Lakes and Florida through West Virginia and southwestern Virginia during the 1920s, a transitional period in the history of road development when the numbered US Highway System replaced historic-scenic named trails. Southern West Virginia and southwestern Virginia are often considered remote and isolated, but they were essential links in two auto trails, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway and the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway. This chapter considers how politics, scale, and geographical imagination coalesced in efforts to route those trails through the Virginias. In the first two sections, I discuss the politics of two sites valued early by Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association: the Tug River Highway in West Virginia, and Bland County in Virginia. In the third section, I

introduce the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway Association, a short-lived, but influential group that promoted a similar route through the Virginias and Carolinas. In the fourth section, I explore the development of US routes 19 and 21, highways influenced by both road-boosting organizations and the burgeoning US Highway System.

The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association and the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway Association would contribute much to highway development including US Highways 19 and 21. US 21 served as the basis for West Virginia's portion of I-77 decades later. Road space is inherently multi-scalar; small sections of road space link larger scales and are bitterly contested. By exploring this important period of highway development in the Virginias, this chapter explores conflicts and ideals of road space at a variety of scales ranging from national down to the extremely local.

The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway

On August 2, 1924 in Wytheville, Virginia, a national road space was born when business and civic leaders from West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina organized the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association to connect the warm vacationlands of Florida to the industrial cities of northwest Ohio and southern Michigan with a reliable all-weather road (*Charleston Gazette* Aug 3, 1924). David Clark of the Charlotte, North Carolina Chamber of Commerce conceived the route, noting that the popular Washington to Richmond route to Florida took travelers “across the poorest part of North Carolina” (*Landmark*, Aug 21, 1924). Clark believed Charlotte and Statesville would benefit from increased traffic. At the meeting, Virginia Governor E. Lee deliberated Virginia's

Robinson Act whereby counties could be reimbursed by the state for highway construction costs within a four-year period.

Through the leadership of its newly elected president, R.P. Johnson (*Charleston Daily Mail* Aug 10, 1924), the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association wielded tremendous influence in the routing and promotion of highways in the Virginias and Carolinas. Among other activities, Johnson sold engines, and heavy equipment for farming and road building from his business in Wytheville. By the time of the 1924 road meeting, Johnson had been a noted tradesman for more than forty years (*Spokesman* 1913, 155). *The Spokesman* and its earlier title, *The Spokesman of the Carriage and Associate Trade* represented the interests of the wagon and automobile industries (1909; 1913). Johnson's interest in road improvement indicates the burgeoning connections between road building, agriculture and vehicle manufacturers. His business concerns however suggest motivations that go beyond mere civic-mindedness. Road improvement was envisioned as a means to help personal fortunes as well local and regional economies.

Under the original plan, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway (Figure 5.1) began at Detroit, where it continued south to Toledo and Columbus. It entered West Virginia at Huntington, and traversed the southern coalfields via the Tug River Highway (State Route No. 8) to Bluefield. It entered Virginia atop East River Mountain before continuing southward through the towns of Bland and Wytheville. From Charlotte, North Carolina, the route traveled southward and terminated in Jacksonville, Florida (*Charleston Daily Mail* Aug 10, 1924).

The Tug River Highway

Road development is influenced by geographical imaginations at multiple scales. Like all roads, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway was not merely a loose connection of termini. Highways pass through numerous locations. In its original configuration, West Virginia's portion of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway traversed the Tug River Highway through the state's southwestern counties. Largely forgotten, the Tug River Highway was created to connect Huntington and Bluefield, railroad centers on opposite edges of the state's southern coalfields. It was also conceived as a regional and even national highway (*Charleston Daily Mail* Mar 11, 1923).



Figure 5.1 The Cleveland-Asheville Route. Source: *Charleston Daily Mail*, September 1, 1924.

Manufacturers Record expected the Tug River Highway to “give McDowell county (WV) and contiguous territory an outlet to the Ohio River” (Oct 26, 1922).

Unfortunately for its boosters, mountainous topography made the road difficult to build and drive. Noting connections between time and space, the *Charleston Daily Mail* criticized the Tug River Highway. It cautioned that despite shorter mileage, a drive from Huntington to Bluefield along the Tug River Highway took longer than via Charleston (Oct 19, 1923). The Tug River Highway’s materiality limited drivers’ *motility* or “the potential for undertaking movements” (Cresswell and Uteng 2008, 2), and prevented the quick, standardized and safe driving expected on modern through routes.

Highways are among those “immobile material” infrastructures that facilitate or hinder motility (Sheller 2011, 358). Its boosters viewed the Tug River Highway as a means to connect southern West Virginia to the state and the nation beyond, but it failed to become a through route. Efforts to improve the highway picked up in the 1930s, when it was designated as US 52. The highway connected the coalfields to a re-routed Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway. The route also served as a local connection between Bluefield and Bland County, Virginia, a region that fared much better in attracting highways.

Bland County, Virginia

David Clark considered Bland a “vital” link in the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway because of its proximity to Charlotte (*Landmark* Aug 21, 1924). There were other routes to the South, but Clark and his colleagues considered Bland County more direct. In Clark’s opinion, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway could not open until

construction ceased on the Bland link (*Landmark* Aug 21, 1924). Despite their locations in adjoining counties travel transporting good between Bluefield and Bland was rather difficult given the mountainous topography (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Dec 9, 1924). It required a new road over East River Mountain, and cooperation with Bland County and the State of Virginia. Bluefield boosters trusted that if Bland passed a bond for the short link between Bastian and Rocky Gap, Virginia would finish what remained (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Mar 21, 1925). Desiring both a through route and local connections with Bland, Bluefield offered to pay Bland's interest for one year if Bland posted "a \$150,000 bond issue," and Virginia took the remaining sections into its state road system (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 30, 1926). Like most routes, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway involved political cooperation and contests at numerous scales.

The fight to include the Tug River Highway and the Bland link exemplifies how Agnew's (1987, 2002) concept of place and politics applies to road space. Parties with multi-scalar interests often undertake political struggles (Agnew 1987, 2002). Exemplifying Agnew's concept of location as a "node that links the place to both wider networks and the territorial ambit it is embedded" (Agnew 2002, 16), the city of Bluefield negotiated and cooperated with Bland County to facilitate both local and through traffic between them. The embedded ambit or scope was an important local connection between Bland and Bluefield, and the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway network. At the same time Bland's proximity to Charlotte made it an important location to the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway. Conversely, the Tug River Highway was envisioned as a location along the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway, but its unreliability and prohibitive terrain hindered its use as a through route.

The Tug River Highway and the proposed section through Bland posed challenges to the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway's "cohesiveness" and "continuity" (Lefebvre 1991, 33). Lefebvre considered road space such as routes and networks, and "motorways" to be attributes of spatial practice (1991, 38), including infrastructure, its routine use, and consistency. For example, Lefebvre (1991, 245) noted that Roman roads allowed imperial Rome "to assert its political centrality." In a similar manner, boosters of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway hoped improved roads would make their towns more accessible to travelers and commercial traffic. The Tug River Highway, however, was incomplete and difficult to drive, and the Bland section was little more than an imagined link. While all this took place another group of road boosters waged its own campaign to market a route to Florida.

The "Cleveland-Asheville Route"

In September 1924 barely a month had passed since the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association's meeting when road enthusiasts based in Asheville, North Carolina began promoting a second route to Florida. The highway was known by several names, including the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway (Figure 5.2), and the "scenic-historic route" (*Charleston Daily Mail* Sep 7, 1924). Its goal was to establish a shorter and more durable tourist highway to Florida while drawing traffic to and through the cities along the route. The Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway Association marketed itself and the route through motorcades as a spectacle from far away.

In October 1924 a motorcade from North Carolina toured the route, making overnight stops in Bluefield and Charleston. Motorcades, or “good-will trips,” as they were sometimes called, were a means of extending social and business networks through a sense of spectacle (*Charleston Gazette* Sep 30, 1924; *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Oct 17, 1924). Spectacle is a means of representing a conceived space (Lefebvre 1991; Gregory 1994). As spectacles, motorcades presented a conception of the importance of connecting faraway places. Likewise, by showing their support to the visiting motorcade, Charleston road enthusiasts hoped to convey their conception Charleston was worthy of the route to Florida. Charlestonians welcomed the motorcade with decorated cars and banners proclaiming “Charleston, West Virginia, Welcomes the Asheville, North Carolina Motorcade” (*Charleston Gazette* Oct 14, 1924; *Charleston Daily Mail* Oct 12, 1924). Thirty-six Charlestonians escorted the eight Asheville road boosters from Bluefield to Charleston and promoted natural spectacles that tourists might flock to see, including the tortuous Cotton Hill Mountain and the Kanawha River via the Kanawha Falls ferry (*Charleston Gazette* Oct 14, 1924).

The Cleveland-Asheville route’s promoters were an eclectic mix of hoteliers, auto club officials, and local chambers of commerce. A few of the more notable personalities included: Reno G. Hoag of Marietta, president of the Marietta chamber of commerce; C.F. Underhill, secretary of the Charleston (WV) Automobile Club and the West Virginia Automobile Association; and the Asheville hotelier and road promoter Roscoe A. Marvel who was elected president of the newly formed Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway Association (*Charleston Daily Mail* Oct 16, 1924). Influenced by historic and scenic trails such as the Lee Highway and the Appalachian Scenic Highway, the

Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway was envisioned as a “scenic-historic route” (*Charleston Daily Mail* Sep 7, 1924).

At its meeting in Charleston, West Virginia’s Governor, Ephraim “E.F.” Morgan presented West Virginia as tourist-friendly. He proposed that a uniform national traffic law would eliminate tourists’ need to know each state’s regulations (*Charleston Gazette* Oct 14, 1924). Although, it did not come to pass, the idea constituted a *bureaucratization through space*, “the installation of “juridico-political grids” through which the state regulates and conducts surveillance of road space (Gregory 1994, 401). The idea surmised that if tourists understood the traffic laws, they would follow the correct driving practices. W.C. Warwick, president of the Bluefield chamber of commerce good roads committee, acclaimed the Charleston route would be opened “at least three years before ... any other route through the state and by that time it will have been firmly established as the accepted route to Florida from the Lakes” (*Charleston Gazette* October 14, 1924).

The Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway Association was pleased with the section from Charleston to Bluefield, and several Asheville groups including the Asheville, North Carolina Automobile Club agreed to spend nearly “\$15,000 ... in advertising and signposting the Lakes to Florida ... route that passes through Charleston” (*Charleston Gazette* Dec 7, 1924). Charleston won a place along the auto trail, but in a few years the burgeoning US Highway System entwined the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway and the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway in an even grander vision of highway development.

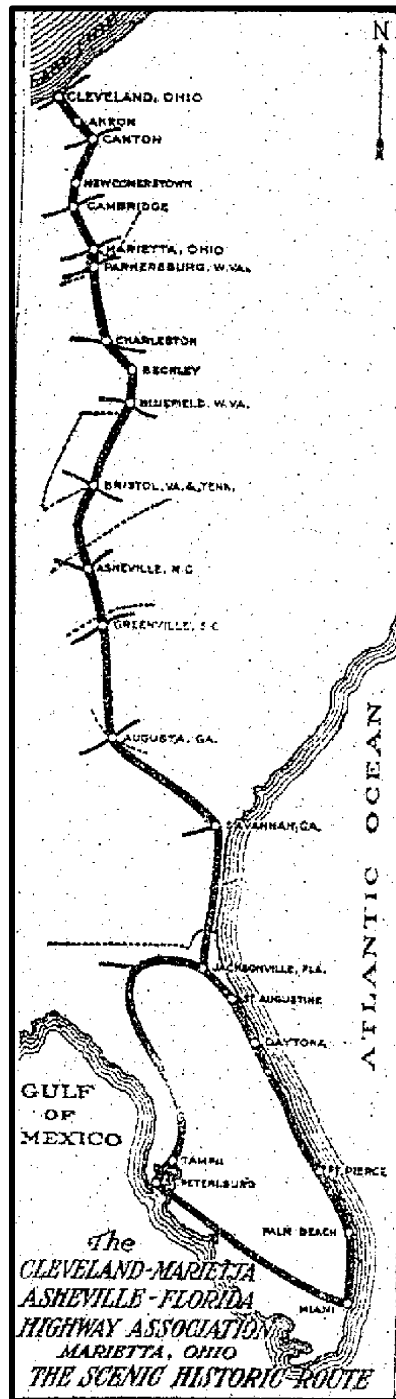


Figure 5.2. The Cleveland-Asheville route, *Charleston Daily Mail*, Sept 7, 1924

US 21: A Multi-Scalar Road Space

Highways involve politics at multiple scales (Edensor 2003; Merriman 2007; Cresswell 2010) and the fight to route a durable highway between the Great Lakes and Florida was no exception. In June 1925, the federal government became a new and predominant player in the fight for a route to Florida when members of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association conferred with the federal Joint Board on Interstate Highways about incorporating their route as a US Highway. The board was responsible for designing the US Highway system and presenting its ideas to the states. As Weingroff explained, many of “the named trail associations,” contested “the Joint Board’s concept of numbering ‘US’ highways” (USDOT 2013a). There were differences in the way the two systems valued the meaning of road space. Named highways evoked a sense of the history and memory by evoking historic events or senses of place, but were fragmented and poorly marked roads, making them difficult to follow (USDOT 2013a). Conversely, the US Highway System was intended to systemize highways with well-marked and uniform road spaces making them simpler to follow (USDOT 2013a). The US Highway concept valued meaning that was conducive to practice rather than memory or sense of place. Whereas named highways placed a high value on meaningful features to attract motorists, the US Highway system was intended to help motorists navigate efficiently.

The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association concluded the meeting with a sense of optimism believing their cause was “meeting with success beyond the most sanguine expectations” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jun 11, 1925). Unlike more powerful and longstanding road groups, such as the Lincoln Highway Association, the Great

Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association was a relative newcomer. Its route was not yet established, and federal backing could help complete its unfinished sections. It seems likely that proponents of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway had some influential connections at the meeting, namely Howard M. Gore, who was simultaneously West Virginia's governor elect and the interim Secretary of Agriculture. On March 2, 1925, two days before taking up his governorship, Gore fulfilled his duty of appointing the Joint Board on Interstate Highways; C.P. Fortney, Chairman of West Virginia's Road Commission, and Virginia Highway Commissioner Henry G. Shirley were among those 21 state representatives (USDOT 2006).

The new Secretary of Agriculture, William M. Jardine, put forth a preliminary list of US Highways (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 22, 1925). West Virginia was granted six US Highways (*Charleston Gazette* Jan 3, 1926). US 21 was set to run between Cleveland and Jacksonville, Florida by way of Parkersburg, Charleston, Beckley, and Princeton and Bluefield, West Virginia; Bland and Wytheville, Virginia; and Sparta, Statesville and Charlotte, North Carolina (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 22, 1925). The *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* observed that US 21 varied from the route proposed by the Lakes to Florida Highway Association, namely omitting Tug River Highway (Nov 22, 1925). Instead, US 21 combined elements from both road-boosting organizations. West Virginia's portion of the highway closely followed the Cleveland-Asheville route (*Charleston Gazette* Jan 3, 1926). However, south of Bluefield, US 21 followed the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway to Wytheville where it would continue to Statesville and Charlotte North Carolina on its way to Jacksonville, Florida (*Charleston Gazette* Jan 3, 1926; *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 26, 1926). US 21 emerged as West Virginia's

central north-south route, and the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* credited the inaugural meeting of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association for the highway's development (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 30, 1926). US 21 would be equated with the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway.

Virginia and Bland County, Virginia were central to visions of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway. They were equally pivotal to US 21. Secretary Jardine enjoined Virginia and its road commission "to exert every influence to have [the] road incorporated immediately into the state highway system" (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 30, 1926). US 21 would follow the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway over East River Mountain. Virginia acquiesced and agreed to Jardine's additional request to route US 21 through Grayson County. Jardine preferred the Grayson County route because it was more direct than the Hillsville, Virginia to Mount Airy, North Carolina route of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway. The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association followed suit and rerouted its efforts to the new US 21. Mount Airy boosters protested that the original Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway routing was official (*The Dispatch* Dec 17, 1928).

Contested Rhythms and Road Space: Cotton Hill and the Kanawha Falls Ferry

Materiality, meaning and practice played key roles in debates over a vital corridor between Charleston and Bluefield. Citizens in Fayette County, West Virginia contested plans to bypass the ferry at Kanawha Falls and the rather twisting macadam road over Cotton Hill. The ferry and Cotton Hill slowed through traffic and a debate ensued over whether local connections were less important than a route for tourists. Highways benefit

some while leaving others to bear the costs (Birdsall 2003). Rerouting may make long trips smoother but displace well-established local patterns of movements. Such was the case when the winding Cotton Hill route and Kanawha Falls Ferry were bypassed to make a road that was straighter and more consistent with a modern US Highway.

In 1926, two Fayette County road factions protested to the West Virginia State Road Commission. Each differed from the commission's proposal that bypassed Cotton Hill and traversed Laurel Creek (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jun 15, 1926). Neither qualified for federal aid because they were not US Highways (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jun 25, 1926). The Fayette citizens protested in court that their routes would benefit 6,000 people, while the state's route would serve just the family of a single railroad employee living near the railroad (*Charleston Gazette* Jun 22, 1926). The Fayette citizens argued that the road commission's plan served tourists and violated laws that required connecting county seats (*Charleston Gazette* Jun 16, 1926). The Fayette citizens contested the West Virginia Road Commission and federal engineers for commodifying and bureaucratizing road space for tourists against the Good Roads Amendment and local preferences. Taking the side of the State Road Commission, the *Daily Mail* criticized the injunction and the fact that disputes can hold up progress:

People of West Virginia, we think, are beginning to realize that road-building is not merely a question of issuing bonds and marketing them, not merely the work of engineers who surmount topographical and other difficulties, not merely in the matter of the material used, or even in the execution of the work. All these things may be satisfactorily arranged for and then the construction of the road be held up become of squabbles between sets or factions as to which route of several is to be taken (*Charleston Daily Mail* Sep 5, 1926).

This quotation shows the preference some gave to materiality and the practice of overcoming physical obstacles. Marketing and issuing bonds were acceptable examples

of meaning, but resisting the road space was not. In critiquing the local protests as “squabbles” the article devalues the importance of representational space, and seems to place faith squarely in conceived, representations of space and common-sense notions of spatial practice (Simonsen 2005). Highways are not simply a matter of materiality and practice, but also include contested meanings.

Judge A.P. Hudson refused the Fayette citizens’ petition, and the citizens brought the case before the West Virginia Supreme Court. The court temporarily halted roadwork pending deliberation. In its final ruling, the Supreme Court allowed the State Road Commission to proceed, (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Sep 8, 1926) but warned they should not “leave impressions with the public concerning expenditures which it may not lawfully make or which future exigencies would likely prevent” (*Charleston Daily Mail* Sep 7, 1926). According to the court, the roads that the Fayette citizens preferred were county roads upon which state money could not be spent. The court ruled against the Fayette citizens, and chided the State Road Commission for making deals that it could not legally keep (*Charleston Daily Mail* Sep 7, 1926). The State Road Commission made promises beyond its authorized bureaucratization of space (Gregory 1994).

In February 1928, the Cotton Hill cut-off and Cotton Hill Station Bridge (Figure 5.3) opened to the public, bypassing both the ferry and the mountain road (*Charleston Gazette* Feb 24, 1928).

The *Gazette* praised the occasion as the opening of a safe and modern highway:

No longer will there be long and tedious delays while awaiting one's turn at the Kanawha Falls, nor the danger of crossing the railroad tracks, to say nothing of the hazardous journey over Cotton Hill mountain, with its narrow strip of macadam that was rapidly falling apart. Nor will the seeker of scenic beauty be denied the inspiring sight that New River Canyon presents from the vicinity of Hawk's Nest, for the new routing takes the motorist almost to the top of Gauley mountain and then takes him down the other side along a grade that is fairly direct, but not too steep. Crossing the canyon is over one of the most picturesque bridges in the state. Giant concrete pillars loom out the rocky depths of New River and hold suspended the substantial steel structure that is the foundation for the span of concrete. The bridge continues high over the railroad tracks on the south side, thus eliminating another dangerous grade crossing (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 10, 1928).

Stressing the bridge as a modern achievement, the *Daily Mail* lauded the bridge and cut-off as engineering feats (Mar 4, 1928). Such praise stressed the meaning that is placed on materiality. By eliminating the threat and fear (meaning) of being hit by a train, the bridge's materiality facilitated safer and more convenient driving practices. The Cotton Hill Station Bridge and the cutoff developed into accepted spatial practice. In her historical description of the bridge, Shelley Birdsong (NPS 1995) explained "Once the bridge was completed and opened, news and controversy about the new route disappeared from the headlines of the Fayette County newspapers". Birdsong does not claim, however, that all debate ceased. Changes in routing and the rhythms of everyday life are certain to stir contestation. Once bypassed, fewer would drive the tortuous route, and for many, it would be relegated to memory. The route's materiality, a curvy macadam road, did not allow for the consistent and smooth driving practice expected of a US Highway. Cotton Hill was imbued with values ranging from slow, scenic and horrific. Furthermore, such meanings and materialities were entwined with practice through the concept of rhythm. Lefebvre proposed that rhythms are relative: "A rhythm

is only slow or fast in relation to other rhythms with which it finds itself associated in a more or less vast unity” (Lefebvre 2004, 89).

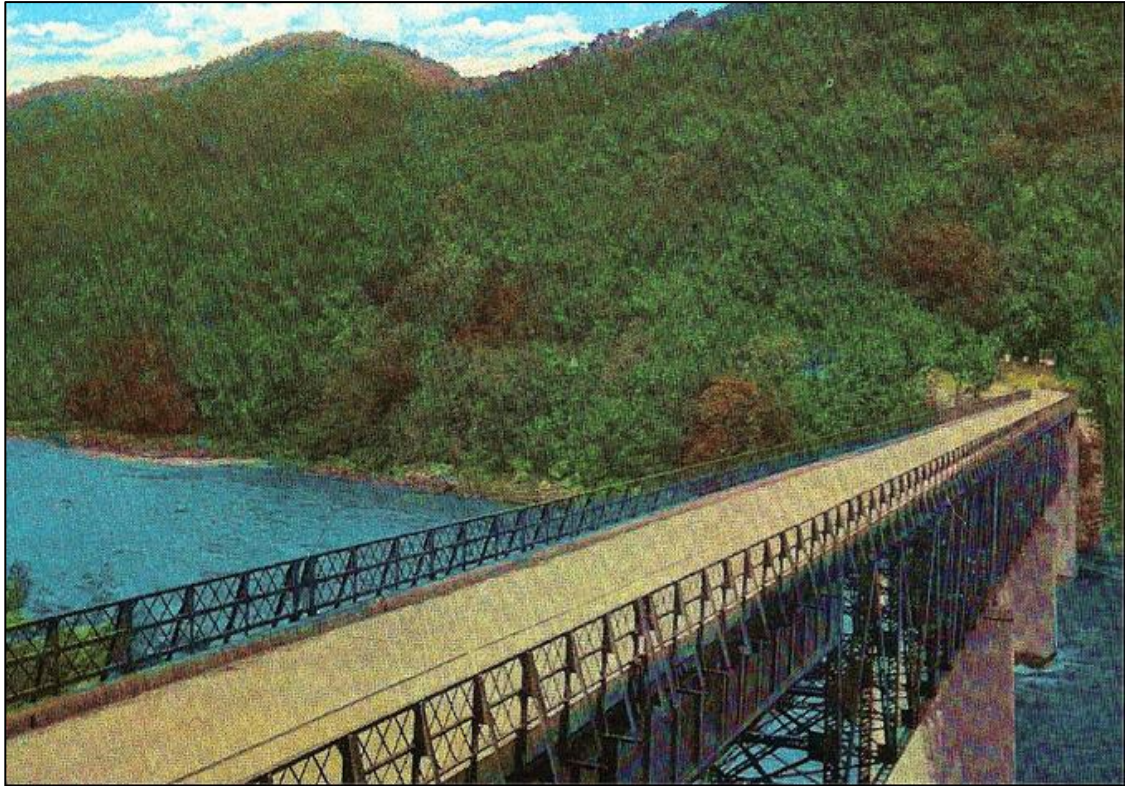


Figure 5.3 Cotton Hill Station Bridge. Undated postcard ca.1930s, adapted from the souvenir folder “Mountain Scenes, Midland Trail and State Route No. 21” by I Robbins and Son, Pittsburgh, PA.

Crouch observed “Places are embodied by the way people use and value them” (2000, 71). Familiarity with curves and expectations of how straight or fast a road should play significant roles in how one feels about a curvy road. At least one writer lamented that when it was bypassed few would get to appreciate Cotton Hill’s unique tortuous rhythms:

People from the flat countries were frightened by a drive over this mountain, and would not come back again, but those who have not driven over it have missed an experience and several thrills. There are many fine views to be had from the new route, which will compensate somewhat for the loss that the change has made (*Charleston Daily Mail* Mar 11, 1928).

As the statement suggests, it left a trace in some who considered Cotton Hill an adventurous route. The writer attached a positive sense of place to the road over Cotton Hill and its 154 curves. Edensor (2010, 2010) explained the rhythms of mobility can contribute to a “mobile sense of place” whereby journeys along familiar routes form a regular part of practicing and experiencing place. Edensor suggests that the regular practice of driving familiar roads allows drivers and passengers to experience the journey, encounter other drivers and notice seasonal changes. A mobile sense of place then encompasses the materialities, driving practices and meanings that occur along road spaces.

Closing the Kanawha Falls Ferry

Another link that failed to fit the materiality, meaning and practice of a US Highway was the Kanawha Falls Ferry. While in operation, the ferry carried local and long-distance traffic across the Kanawha River. The Cotton Hill cutoff and the new bridge over the New River made the Kanawha Falls ferry obsolete. In March 1928, less

than one month after the cutoff and the new bridge opened, the operators of the Kanawha Falls ferry asked the Public Service Commission for permission to halt its nightly operations, proclaiming it could not break even if it continued to run at night (*Charleston Daily Mail* Mar 22, 1928). Few long distance travelers opted to use the ferry when given the choice of a free modern bridge. The ferry closed on April 14, 1929 and a private toll bridge opened the next day (*Montgomery (WV) Herald* Nov 7, 2012). As a toll bridge, the Kanawha Falls Bridge exemplified the commodification of road space as a means of maintaining the local community's highway access to US Routes 19, 21 and 50, as well travel that Binnie et al. described as "more modest journeys of the everyday" (2007, 166). Despite its local benefits, the Kanawha Falls Bridge also faced contestation. The Clark Brothers, owners of the ferry service, were asked, once again, to bear the burden of progress.

The West Virginia State Senate authorized plans for the toll bridge in January 1927 (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 7, 1927). In an interview published in November 2012, Merriam Kirby, Harry Clark's daughter, disclosed to the *Montgomery (WV) Herald* that the state essentially ordered her family to sell the property. They refused and took the issue to court. As Kirby describes it, when the court asked her father why he would not sell, he told it rather bluntly "it wasn't ... their business why he didn't want to sell the land," but over time the two sides reached a compromise (*Montgomery Herald* Nov 7, 2012). The land was sold and the bridge was built.

In 1944, the toll bridge survived another round of contestation when the State Road Commissioner, Ernest L. Bailey, threatened to ask the state legislature to purchase the span. Bailey appraised the value at \$35,000, proclaiming "it should not cost the state

more than the price of junk—because it is used so little” (*Raleigh Register* Jul 30, 1944). The bridge did not fit Bailey’s conception of a valuable highway asset and he evaluated it in monetary terms. It certainly held value to the communities that depended on it. The bridge was made necessary by the conceived and perceived spaces of the modern US Highway system and had itself become a material necessity to facilitate local traffic. Kirby and Bailey evaluated the bridge’s meaning rather differently. For Kirby, the bridge was a significant part of her sense of place. Conversely, Bailey evaluated the bridge as junk because it did not fit his conception of a worthy, modern bridge.

A Convergence and Divergence of Time, Space and Politics

The stretch of US 21 between Spanishburg and Flat Top was also contested. During its construction, the rugged stretch was notorious for long and impassible detours. The carved topography made “a satisfactory parallel detour” practically impossible to build (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Aug 30, 1925). One recommended detour took drivers “more than 150 miles” out of their way to avoid just 23 miles of road construction (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Aug 30, 1925), a true breakdown in the rhythm and competence of the roadway. The *Daily Telegraph* argued that a weakness of West Virginia’s road program was “no provision for the upkeep of detours during road construction” (May 25, 1926). Graham and Thrift point out that maintenance and repair are key elements maintaining a “myth of order” (2007, 8). Detours present breaks in rhythms of driving practice while the route’s materiality is constructed or improved at another location. Barely improved and unmaintained detours broke the myth of order to the drivers’ consternation and gave the route and the road commission a negative image.

As Peter Adey suggests, “A breakdown in rhythm highlights mobilities that haven’t quite coincided” (2009, 29). To make matters worse, some drivers opted to drive the closed and unfinished route causing, “[c]onsiderable damage ... to the unfinished construction” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Aug 1, 1926). The production of road space, then, consists of multiple rhythms, including those of the drivers but also the rhythms of maintenance and repair.

On October 28, 1926, West Virginia’s segment of the route opened between Williamstown and Bluefield. It was not officially a US Highway, but the long awaited route to Florida was operable. Jack Allen, a cameraman for Hearst International News Reel, filmed the celebration including the motorcade to Flat Top (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Oct 26, 1926). The planners urged motorcade participants to stay in line and not veer or drop out. A disorderly motorcade would diminish the film’s effect, and limit its national distribution (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Oct 28, 1926). The celebration included a pageant depicting “travel progress” from oxcarts to automobiles (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Oct 23, 1926). Over 10,000 attended the festivities (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Oct 29, 1926). To promote the new route, boosters from cities along the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway advertised in the October 1926 edition of *American Motorist*, a magazine published by the American Automobile Association. Feature articles described destinations and travel throughout the Deep South and Southeast. The ad in the October 1926 edition of AAA's monthly *American Motorist* referred to the highway simply as a “new ‘short route’” (Bluefield Chamber of Commerce, 1926, 119).

Racing Time: Cooper's Dash from Cleveland to Jacksonville

In his article “Excavating the Prehistory of Time-Space Compression,” Warf (2011) observed that critical commentary on time-space compression predates the 1950s and 1960s as is commonly thought among geographers. Warf continues the work of those such as Schivelbusch (1986) and Standage (1998), who explored the histories of great innovations in transportation and communications. The idea of whizzing by quickly over a long distance and conquering time and space is exemplified by the exploit of Herbert Cooper, a Bluefield police officer who undertook a Lakes-to-Florida trip to promote the new short route (Figure 5.4). It was perhaps the greatest spectacle related to the opening of the new north-south highway. In the early morning hours of November 1, 1926, Cooper and Robert Litz left Cleveland for Jacksonville, Florida, a non-stop journey that would take them 36½ hours to complete (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 3, 1926). Bluefield sponsored the spectacle to advertise their city, the new route, and to show the ability of modern roads and American-made cars to compete with trains (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Oct 31, 1926). Basically following the Cleveland to Asheville route (Figure 5.4), Cooper drove the first 19 hours and was relieved by Litz for a four-hour period before continuing the journey (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 3, 1926).

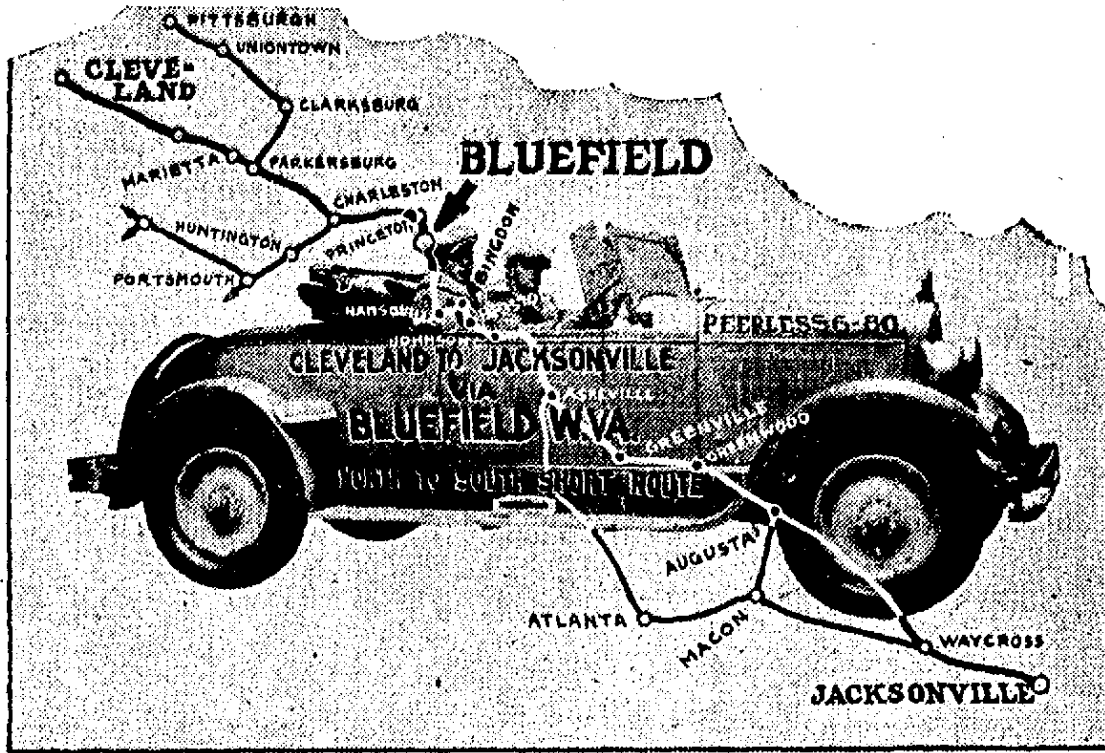


Figure 5.4. “Herbert Cooper Races to South in 30 1-2 Hours.” *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* November 3, 1926

The *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* presented Cooper’s “dash” as a spectacle that placed Bluefield at the forefront of modern transportation and communications. In its article “Bluefield Pilot Races Southward Thousands Watch,” the paper presented Cooper as fighting time and death:

Racing with time, the Bluefielder stops only when necessary, giving the old boy with the scythe a run for his money, but time doesn’t have to wait for ferries, doesn’t lose its way at unmarked cross roads, doesn’t have to argue with traffic cops and isn’t bothered with slippery roads and foggy weather. Time is moving fast, but so is Herb (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 2, 1926).

In its article “Distance Yields to Great Speed Quickness,” the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* described the important role communications played in the journey, including Cooper’s participation in radio broadcasts and parades that “heralded Bluefield as an important center located on the Lakes-to-Florida highway” (Nov 7, 1926). The article also praised

the telephone: “when Herbert Cooper spoke into the telephone from Jacksonville, he was heard distinctly. His voice travelled at the rate of 186,000 miles a second over the same route which his Peerless only a few hours before, plunged southward at thirty-six miles an hour” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 7, 1926).

The route to Florida was viewed as a means of conquering time and space, but a controversy developed with Oak Hill, West Virginia when Cooper was pulled over for speeding. The *Daily Telegraph* exclaimed “The only time Herbert Cooper was stopped in this record non-stop speed run from the Great Lakes to Florida was at Oak Hill, in his own state of West Virginia and he lost several minutes of valuable time in persuading the officer to accept a bond for his appearance” (Nov 14, 1926). The article warned that other drivers complained Oak Hill was a speed trap. Speed traps are a widely loathed form of surveillance. The conquering time and space had been momentarily thwarted by police surveillance, but several Oak Hill citizens claimed the city was “strong for the Lakes-to-Florida Highway” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 17, 1926). Oak Hill’s mayor and the Fayette County sheriff proclaimed that the city welcomed tourists and that there were no speed traps (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 14, 1926).

The spectacle of Herbert Cooper’s drive highlighted the role of meaning in the production of road space. It was intended to prove that people could consistently drive from the Lakes to Florida, but Cooper benefited from police escorts through parts of the Virginias, the Carolinas and Florida (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* November 3, 1926). Cooper admitted “Had it not been for the fact that this car was so comfortable and easy to handle and my desire to carry out the wishes of the people of Bluefield ... it would have been impossible to have endured the strain for this length of time” (*Bluefield Daily*

Telegraph November 3, 1926). As with many spectacles, Cooper's trip drew attention to Bluefield, but it did not reflect everyday practice. Few could undertake such a journey with or without the benefit of comfortable cars or police escorts. Furthermore, one can surmise that Bluefield's leaders would rather have drivers linger there than race by on a trip elsewhere.

Contiguous Spaces and Contentious Politics: US 19/21 and State Route No. 4

Decades before the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway and Herbert Cooper's trek, Chesterton warned that whizzing by places was not a particularly good means of encountering them. "Motor-car civilization" he wrote, "[goes] its triumphant way, outstripping time, consuming space, seeing all and seeing nothing" (1905, 26). Road space can lead to places but it can also bypass them. One point of contention over road space is the scale of need it should serve. Such issues were exacerbated by conflicts over the US Highway System. On November 11, 1926, two weeks after the Flat Top celebration, the American Association of State Highway Officials approved the final routings of the US Highway System, but information on the "the exact location of the routes" was withheld until January 2, 1927 so that maps could be produced and published. US 21 would not end in Jacksonville, or even Florida as indicated in the preliminary November 1925 routing (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 22, 1925). Instead, it stretched from Cleveland to Yemassee, South Carolina, where it intersected US 17, a route to Jacksonville (USDA). Another important change was the extension of US 19 (State Route No. 4). It ran conterminously with US 21 between Gauley Bridge and Bluefield. From there, it diverged southwestward toward Bristol and Asheville. The

Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway had been overlooked in the first round of US Highway allotments. As US 19, the route continued to Atlanta, but years later it would stretch to the Gulf Coast of Florida.

Once again, tourism played an important role in the vision and contested politics of the road space. Having two US highways, the *Daily Telegraph* surmised, “absolutely assures Bluefield’s future as a tourist center” (Nov 18, 1926). During negotiations, however, US 19 supporters were not even assured that the route would be approved. According to the *Daily Telegraph*, Conrad Brevick, secretary of the Bluefield Chamber of Commerce and a frequent collaborator with the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway Association, “conceived the idea of having it” run conterminously with US 21. Road boosters, including various chambers of commerce, Roscoe Marvel, and West Virginia’s road commissioner, C.P. Fortney, sold the idea of an extended US 19 to the Bureau of Public Roads and the road commissions of Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Pennsylvania (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 19, 1926).

One concern of selling the extension to the Bureau of Public Roads was the conterminous stretch with US 21 (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 19, 1926). Avoiding the confusion over multi-named routes was a rationale for the US numbered system. There were few options for routing a north-south highway between Bluefield and Gauley Bridge. The mountainous topography and steep river canyons made funneling traffic through the “jugneck” at Kanawha Falls and later Gauley Bridge a necessity (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Aug 17, 1926). West Virginia’s portions of US 21 from Parkersburg and US 19 (State Route No. 4) from Morgantown converged heading south along US Highway 19-21. In the map (Figure 5.5) and postcard image (Figure 5.6), US 50

diverges up the mountain and continues eastward while US 19/21 diverges to the right along the Cotton Hill cutoff. Following the New River and crossing the bridge over Honey Creek the route crossed Cotton Hill Station Bridge (Figure 5.3). It is worth noting that the postcard collection from which Figures 5.3 and 5.6 were obtained was as State Route No. 21. US 21 and State Route No. 21 were sometimes confused with each other (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Apr 1, 1931).

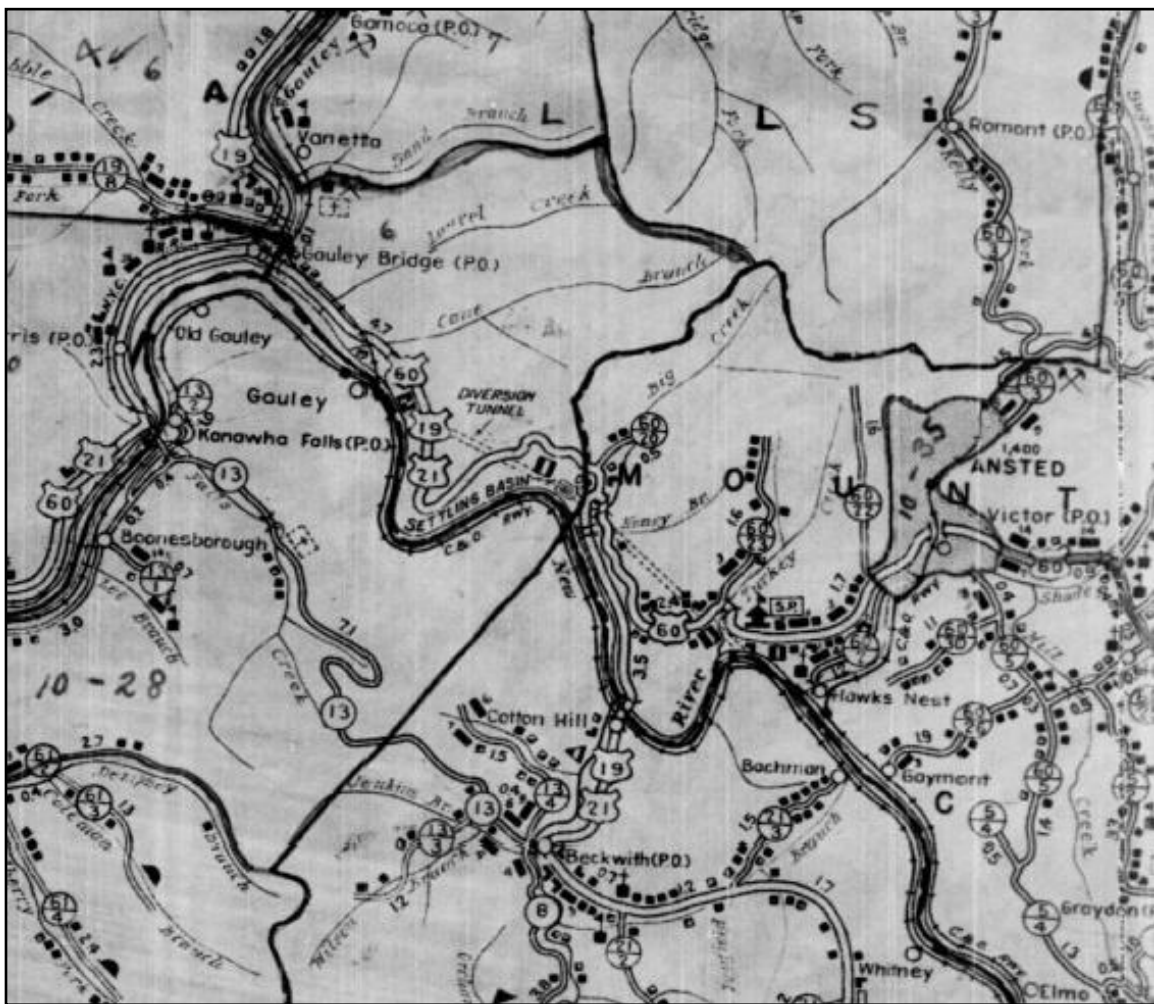


Figure 5.5 Modified from 1940 Census Enumeration-West Virginia-Fayette County-ED 10-1- ED 10-50. US Bureau of the Census. Obtained from National Archives <http://research.archives.gov/description/5840936> (accessed June 19, 2013).

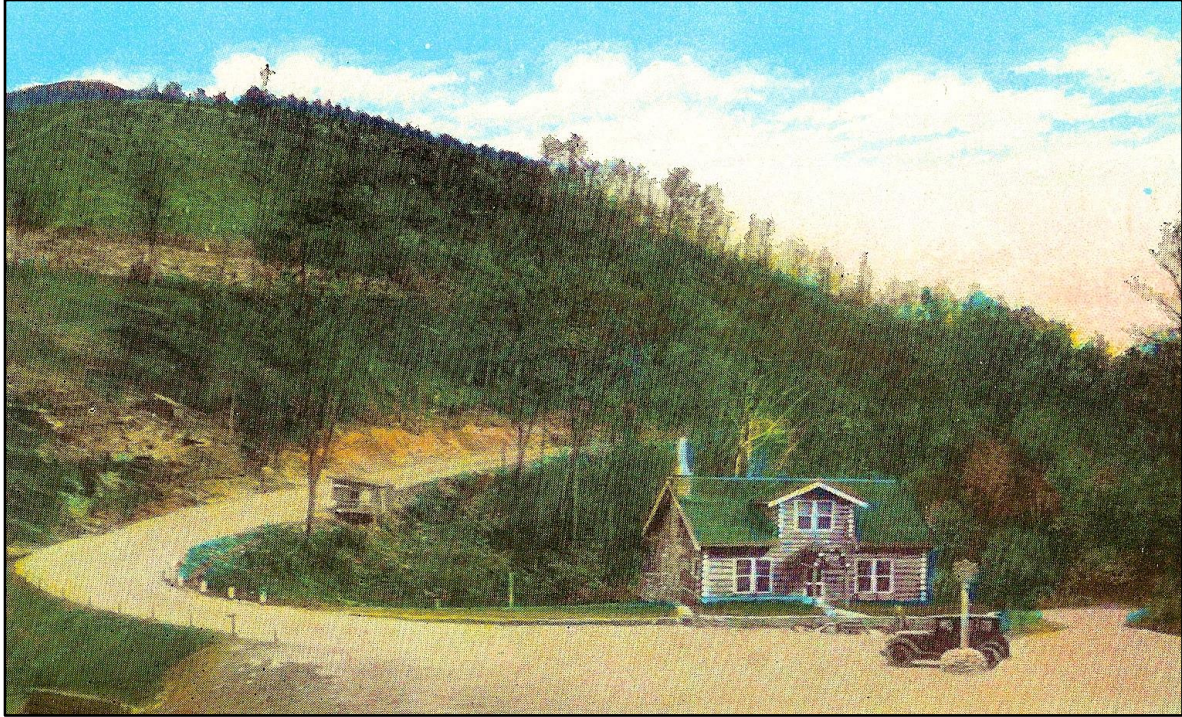


Figure 5.6. Chimney Corner. Undated postcard ca.1930s, adapted from the souvenir folder “Mountain Scenes, Midland Trail and State Route No. 21” by I Robbins and Son, Pittsburgh, PA.

US 19 and Contentious Combinations

Space and place are produced and contested at numerous scales ranging from global to local and by various groups of interest. When Brevick and other supporters negotiated routing US 19 through West Virginia, some were concerned that those lobbying for US 21 to pass between Charleston to Parkersburg “might have objected strenuously to another north and south route through the state” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 19, 1926). To avoid tipping off US 21 supporters, West Virginian boosters of US 19 maintained a low profile for more than a year (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 19, 1926). Brevick and the Bluefield Chamber of Commerce did not want to appear encroach upon Parkersburg and Charleston’s own commodification and

bureaucratization of space (Gregory 1994). Such negative publicity might have thwarted the chances of extending US 19.

Months after its extension, the fight for US 19 was far from over. In March 1927, the West Virginia Senate approved a road bill eliminating funding for State Route No. 4 (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 24, 1927). The heart of the debate concerned discretionary use of state road funds and whether the public was best served by through routes for tourists, or local road development. The West Virginia House passed a bill issuing 15 million dollars in road bonds, giving “the road commission wide discretion in expenditure of the money” (*Charleston Gazette* Apr 27, 1927). Conversely, the senate’s version of the bill set minimum funding expenditures for particular routes and left out Route No. 4 and US 19 (*Charleston Gazette* Apr 27, 1927). The senate’s version passed by a margin of 24 to 5 (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 25, 1927).

The five senators who opposed the bill were from districts the route traversed, leading the *Gazette* to suggest, “the line-up was geographical rather than political” (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 24, 1927). In reality the discourses for and against the route were both political and geographical. For example, Senator Walter Hallanan, of Charleston, was an opponent of the route. In a speech published by the *Charleston Gazette*, Hallanan proposed that through routes should not be built for tourists when for months at a time many West Virginians “are practically isolated from adjoining counties.” Hallanan maintained “Rather than to provide roads to tourists, I think the important purpose of this legislature is to see that the county seats are all connected by a system of hard roads” (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 25, 1927). Whether to fund through routes or local routes are common conflicts over road space.

Bluefield's hope of being a great tourist center is just one example of the type of tourist route discourse the senate bill critiqued (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 18, 1926). Supporting local connectivity, Hallanan proclaimed "People who pay taxes to retire these [road] bonds should not be deprived of an opportunity to share in the benefits" (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 25, 1927). However, many in the House of Delegates disagreed. *Gazette* writer, Clyde East exclaimed:

Twenty-two members of the house live in counties through which the route passes, while as many more delegates come from counties which would be directly benefitted. From a *geographical standpoint*, it would seem that the advocates of reinstatement of the north-south highway would have an advantage over those who advocate the bill as it is (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 27, 1927 italics added).

Relations between the house and senate were "intensely strained" over the matter (*Charleston Gazette* May 1, 1927). A *Gazette* editorial in favor of US 19 surmised "A strong reason why Route No. 4 (US. 19) should be completed is that since it cuts down through the exact center of the State, it will unite the Southern and Northern parts of West Virginia which now are very much separated from each other" (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 29, 1927). Putting local interests over that of the state, Harold Tomkins, president of the Southern West Virginia Automobile Club, criticized the senate bill in a letter, exclaiming "automobilists both from within and outside our state ... want good roads because it is infinitely cheaper to pay a reasonable gasoline tax and have the benefit of good roads ... we sincerely trust that the legislature will so provide, not for any particular sections, but for the state road system as a whole" (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 29, 1927).

Senator Hallanan preferred a more fragmented network of highways that would overcome the isolation of adjoining counties. Conversely, Tomkins favored a broader "state road system" and national connectivity. From his perspective, the senate bill's

local-mindedness amounted to “‘pork barrel’ legislation” (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 29, 1927). For Tomkins, the legitimate rights belonged to in-state and out-of-state “automobilists” who paid for highways through gasoline taxes (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 29, 1927). Taking a similar stance, a March 30, 1927 *Gazette* article surmised that US 19 would help unite “Northern and Southern West Virginia ... which have been somewhat isolated” (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 30, 1927). As a state highway, the West Virginia Legislature could intervene in the space of State Route No. 4. In May 1927 the controversy ended when Governor Gore signed a bill granting “two million dollars ... exclusively for making connections on eight selected routes with Route No. 4 included in the list” (*Charleston Gazette* May 1, 1927).

Contested Orderings of Road Space

During the 1920s southern West Virginia became increasingly connected to the state and nation via two north-south United States highways, US 21 and US 19. US 19 had endured an early vote of confidence. State Route No. 4 had evolved into two US Highways. Three decades later, the so-called jugneck of US 19/21 would be the site of another controversial road space, the West Virginia Turnpike and I-77 (chapter 7). Bluefield was hailed an “auto road pivot” for traffic between the Lakes to the Gulf. It lay situated at the southern end of the jugneck and would soon have three US Highways as Bluefield vied to extend its connections to the coalfields along the Tug River Highway also known as State Route No. 8 (chapter 6). The Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association and the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway Association were founded on the notion that good roads were vital to development. Each conceived of their routes as

shorter, faster and the best connection between the Great Lakes and Florida. They imagined routes in which the materiality of road space equaled the practice of cross-country driving. Members of both groups played significant roles in persuading the federal government to classify the parts of both north-south routes as US Highways 19 and 21.

In his work on the orderings of tourism, Franklin insisted “There is far too little said about the necessary work creating the conditions in which people *could* travel, *could* imagine the extraordinary, stay in extraordinary places and (have the skills to) enjoy them” (2004, 284). The same can be said of road space. The US Highway System was created to connect the country with a well-ordered and easily recognizable road space. This ordering did not go uncontested. For example, protests over the re-routing of Cotton Hill for US 21 and the funding of US 19 were based on concerns that through routes were conceived without considering the lived spaces of local residents. US 21 and US 19 exemplified that the production of road space is conducted and contested at multiple scales ranging from small sections of road such as curves and bridges to national highways. Adey suggests “Mobility is frequently *ideological*, embedded within the most overt political discourses” (2010, 285 italics in original). Protests of road space frequently concern rhythms at these various scales. US 21, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway was ordered by circumventing Cotton Hill, replacing the ferry, and building a more consistent route between Flat Top and Spanishburg.

The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway and the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway began with two groups and aspirations to promote shorter routes to Florida. Their efforts played key roles in the highway development of the Virginias

through the 1920s and beyond. Their geographical imaginations influenced material changes to the region's highway infrastructure. In their article "Rhythmanalysing the Coach Tour," Edensor and Holloway observed "different scales, pulses and durations of rhythms intersect, and may clash or harmonise, producing reliable moments of regularity or less consistent variance" (2008, 484). Both groups aimed to connect popular destinations with links to and through lesser-known places. Large-scale trends are important. Auto trails and the US Highway System inspired the work of both road-boasting organizations. There is, however, no such thing as a purely large-scale road space. This chapter illustrates that lesser-known road spaces are worthy of research.

Chapter 6

The Super-Highway that Time Forgot

Roads are ubiquitous, yet few understand the politics and histories of their development. Despite their ubiquity, roads are topographically and politically uneven. During the 1920s, road boosters promoted auto-trails to Florida that influenced the routing of US Highways 19 and 21. The Tug River Highway (State Route No. 8) was overlooked in that initial routing of US Highways but boosters continued to fight for modern road space. Throughout the 1920s State Route No. 8 was a would-be major highway and a potential link in the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway. In 1931, it was designated as US 52, but it took nearly a decade to finish major rerouting projects. This chapter explores how materiality and practice intersected with geographical imaginations in efforts to improve the southeastern section of State Route No. 8, and transform it into US 52. The southeastern section traversed McDowell and Mercer, two counties with thriving mobilities despite terrible roads. Roads are produced at numerous scales. It failed as a through route, but U.S 52 tied McDowell and Mercer, and formed a junction with US 21, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway. Today, the route maintains its role as a feeder route connecting the coalfields of McDowell to the larger highways in Mercer and beyond.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first, I contextualize demands for a modern inter-county route by introducing the Black Diamond bus line and Consolidated Bus Lines, two companies that formed a “transportation empire” spanning the 1920s to 1950s (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Mar 6, 2011). During the 1920s and

1930s hopes for modern highways in Mercer and McDowell counties centered largely on overcoming topographical barriers and easing the difficult driving practices caused by them. Discussing the Black Diamond bus line and Consolidated Bus Lines contextualizes mobility and demands for roads in the coalfields by demonstrating the role of roads in making the coalfields a modern consumer society.

Busses brought mobility to many people in McDowell and Mercer counties. I adapt the concept of *taskscape* (Ingold 1993, 158; Ingold and Kurttila, 2000) as a means of tying the bus lines, consumption, and power to the practice of road space. In the second section, I discuss the politics of bad roads with a special focus on Simmons Mountain, a gap in State Route No. 8, and a significant barrier to traffic between the McDowell and Mercer. I draw on the concept of kinaesthetics, the study of motion, to explore how driving deplorable roads was used as a political tool to exhort their improvement. In the third section, I discuss the upgrading of State Route No. 8 into US 52. In this section, the common theme is multiple orderings of space. It considers debates over whether nature was a thing to be conquered or preserved. Roadcuts were lauded for conquering nature and shrinking time and space. Conversely, plans to damage or destroy Pinnacle Rock, a well-known sandstone monolith, were protested. Bridges were built to bypass multiple-ordered spaces such as railroads, but not without protest. State Route No. 8 and its later moniker, US 52, was a small and winding highway, but it was a large site of struggle and protest.

The Black Diamond Bus Line: Everyday Productions of Road Space

Massey aptly observed “Much of life for many people, even in the heart of the First World, still consists of waiting in a bus-shelter with your shopping for a bus that never comes” (1994, 163). Public transportation is a significant and contested aspect of road space (Cresswell 2010). During the 1920s to 1960s a sprawling network of bus routes connected the coalfields to the world beyond. As James Craft explained in his autobiography *Wheels on the Mountains*, bus service began in the coalfields with “the building of hard roads that penetrated the hills and hollows in the mining areas” (1969, 86). Carrol Woods founded Black Diamond in 1922 as a part of his Pocahontas Transportation Company, marketing mobility to the masses (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 22, 1925). The name “Black Diamond” was a gesture to the coal industry, and its initial fleet was chosen specifically for the narrow, winding roadways of the coalfields region. The company bought three specially designed four-door, sixteen-passenger busses without aisles to accommodate the narrow and highly used roads of the coalfields near Welch and Bluefield (*Bus Transportation*, 1922; *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 22, 1925). A phenomenal success, the bus line reported it transported one million passengers in 1925 and covered 1,000 miles daily. It operated primarily in communities near in Welch, McDowell’s county seat. The Black Diamond line offered mobility, comfort and convenience in a network of 38 towns and villages between Bluefield, the McDowell coalfields and Pocahontas, Virginia (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 22, 1925).

Taskscape and Rhythm as Commodified Road Space

In February 1925, the Pocahontas Transportation Company opened a new terminal in Welch to cement its role in the coalfields (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 22, 1925). Terminals are examples of moorings, stationary features that facilitate mobility (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Adey 2006). Moorings are material structures that shape the practice and meaning of mobilities. Among its creature comforts, the Welch bus terminal offered customers a tile floor, leather upholstered chairs, candy, and cigars (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 17, 1925; Feb 25, 1925). On February 22, the Pocahontas Transportation Company presented an editorial/advertisement that took up much of two pages in that day's *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*. As the company described it, the bus line traversed some rather densely populated sections. One stretch of its route through the coalfields featured "approximately 20 miles with almost continuous habitation" (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 22, 1925). It boasted an estimated 40,000 inhabitants along its routes and 140,000 in McDowell and Mercer counties" (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 22, 1925).

Black Diamond provided a valuable service, but it was a commodity and not an act of altruism. Black Diamond shaped the power-geometries (Massey 1993) of road space during the 1920s through marketing and aggressive tactics toward its competition. Although American highways are often associated with speed and freedom (Cresswell 2010), various groups are mobilized differently (Edensor 2000, 2004). Road space is imbued with meaning that in turn shapes practice. For example, Black Diamond advertised comfort and convenience to coalfield housewives. The article suggested "The lady at the head of the house, who lives up the 'hollows,' comes to town on the bus to do

her shopping, returning in time to have supper ready for dad and the youngsters who have come home from work and school on the bus” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 22, 1925). Hollows, pronounced “hollers” in the local vernacular, are remote and often poor communities positioned above or below the main roads. By extending service to hollows, Black Diamond presented itself as offering accessibility and flexibility to geographically and socio-economically marginalized subjects. It is worth noting that although the female subject is bequeathed with the label “head of the house,” the bus was a means of extending her workspace. She could shop and return home in time to have a meal prepared for her family, who also rode the bus to school and work.

The road and bus were extensions of residents’ taskscapes, or the collected “acts of dwelling” (Ingold 1993, 158; Ingold and Kurttila 2000) performed on and through that road space. Ingold’s “dwelling perspective” recognizes “the lives and works of past generations” as vital in contributing to present landscapes (1993, 152). It is important to examine unevenness and struggle (Massey 1993; Staeheli and Mitchell 2009). For example, young males’ travel options were presented much differently than homemakers. According to the article/ad, “Johnnie calls on his best girl after supper and on the bus they go to a different movie every night” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 22, 1925). Such discourse exemplifies Cresswell and Uteng’s (2008) argument that mobility is encoded with engendered meanings. It also indicates that road space was not simply for the wealthy. Roads were likewise implicated in the everyday life of working classes (Moran 2005).

The Pocahontas Transportation Company and its Black Diamond bus line would play a vital role in producing road space in southern West Virginia and shaping everyday

life, its meaning and practice. Black Diamond promoted itself as a significant part of the area's everyday taskscape. Ingold's (1993) use of taskscape and Edensor's (2003) related concept of roadscape primarily describe the myriad of activities that take place in a landscape. Their concepts evoke the point of view of the individual agent moving, observing and experiencing the immediate surroundings. However, I draw on taskscape as a means of exploring connections between the materiality, meaning and practice of road space. Road building is an important factor in the production of road space, but as the above section indicates, discourses on how roads are used are also vital. The Pocahontas Transportation Company made a case for its importance and convenience to the community. It bussed children "safely to school every morning ... and ... safely to their homes irrespective of distance" (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 22, 1925). As I illustrate below, however, Black Diamond's discourse on taskscape and ordering of rhythm was not limited to customers. Just as the Pocahontas Transportation Company published its above-cited advertisement, "The Growth of Bus Service," which I frequently cite, a territorial dispute was brewing over its road space. Woods and his Pocahontas Transportation Company took aggressive aim at taxis, a popular and versatile form of public transportation that competed with the bus line in McDowell County.

The Taxi-Bus War

Critical scholars often contend that the production of place and space is political and contested (Lefebvre 1991; Mitchell 1995; Cresswell 2004). The fight between taxi drivers and the growing Pocahontas Transportation Company was nothing less than a struggle for road space. Rhythms, taskscapes and other spatial orderings of highways do

not simply happen but involve contested powers relations. Black Diamond claimed to conquer time and space for its customers, but neither time nor space were conquered. To the contrary, new types of spaces are created (Mitchell 1997, 304). In 1924, a dispute developed when Woods filed and won an injunction against James “Jack” Craft and other Welch taxi drivers enjoining them from operating in McDowell County (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 4, 1925; *Charleston Daily Mail* Nov 23, 1924). Craft labeled the conflict, “The Taxi-Bus War” (1969, 49). Although Craft was named in the lawsuit, over 100 “jitney” or unlicensed taxi drivers were included (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 3, 1925). Craft observed that in “1922 and '23, taxis did not need any special state or city licenses. In order to identify ourselves, we merely put a sign on the car somewhere saying Taxi. As roads were built and improved in the McDowell County coal field, taxi transportation developed into a gigantic business” (1969, 40). The taxi drivers’ taskscapes were not bureaucratized by the need for licenses. Woods’s lawsuit took advantage of new yet unheeded regulations to defend the bus lines’ commodified space through the enforcement of bureaucratized space. The controversy altered the taskscapes of passengers, particularly those who took cabs or depended upon them for transportation by creating a situation with less competition and fewer options to the riding public.

The McDowell County Automobile Association supported the cab drivers by making arrangements to collect the \$5,000 bond required to appeal the case to the state supreme court (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Dec 17, 1924). In January 1925, the taxi drivers were issued permits allowing them to operate pending the Supreme Court’s decision (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 4, 1925). The West Virginia Supreme Court upheld the injunction against the taxi drivers and voided their temporary permits. Despite

appeals from the automobile club “of which more than 400 members [were] taxi drivers,” the cabs were denied permits (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 13, 1925). The court annihilated the cab drivers’ use of road space by legal decree (Mitchell 1997). The physical space for cabs was made illegal by the meanings proscribed in the laws and regulations. In his work on how U.S. Supreme Court decisions shaped meanings of mobility as a right, Cresswell noted the significance of context in such meanings (2006, 2010). The case shows the connections inherent between meaning, materiality and practice as cabs and busses competed for the physical space and bodies of passengers. The conflict involved both action (practice) and a fight over definitions (meaning). The final decision limited the practice of operating and taking cabs in Welch.

Crang enjoins us to “examine how mobility is produced through specific spaces” (2002, 569). The struggle for cab space in Welch illustrates the need to examine the role conflict plays in the rhythms of mundane spaces (Mitchell 1997; Cresswell 2006, 2010; Merriman 2009). It also demonstrates that space is contested everywhere (Mitchell 2000; Massey 2005) and that road space is no exception (Merriman 2007; Cresswell 2010). At the time of the Taxi-Bus War, perhaps few realized that the struggle over cab space would pit Woods and Craft, two of southern West Virginia’s great producers of road space, against each other. Craft began his transportation career under meager conditions. He moved to McDowell from Kentucky to work in the mines and after laboring “long enough to repay the company his transportation expenses,” Craft left the mine and drove coal company executives on their ‘rounds’ (Beanblossom 2012). In 1921, Craft started a taxi service in Welch with a model-T Ford (Craft 1969). In 1934 Woods and Craft crossed paths yet again, when Craft purchased the Pocahontas Transportation Company

from Woods to form his own public transportation company, Consolidated Bus Lines. The spurned cabbie would go on to head one of the most prolific transportation networks in southern West Virginia. The Pocahontas Transportation Company and its successor formed what would constitute a large “transportation empire” with routes traversing southern West Virginia and linking it to surrounding states (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Mar 6, 2011).

Tortuous Time-Spaces: Bad Roads and the Production of Road Space

From the mid-1920s to the late 1930s, State Route No. 8’s materiality did not meet demands for good roads. The region’s challenging topography made it difficult to build and navigate its roadways. It is easy to overlook the banal when imagining high speed and long distance travel, but the mundane and everyday are vital aspects of a multi-scalar production of space (Lefebvre 1991; Moran 2005; Edensor 2007; Binnie et al. 2007). Short distances can be difficult to traverse over rough terrain. In 1922, Black Diamond’s route system had significant topographical gaps. Despite its densely populated routes, the Black Diamond line could not connect Bluefield and Welch, two of its most significant cities, until a 5½ mile road connecting Bramwell (Mercer County) and Maybeury (McDowell County) was completed (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 22, 1925). The 5½ mile gap was along Simmons Mountain. From its beginnings in 1922 the company anticipated the road’s opening and service along the 35-mile route between Bluefield and Welch (*Bus Transportation* 1922). Figure 6.1 shows Black Diamond’s route in the two Virginias in 1925. Simmons Mountain road is the thin line indicated by the arrow (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 22, 1925). Maps do not always accurately or

fairly represent space (Harley and Laxton 2001), but the thin line across Simmons Mountain suggested its narrow road space. When the long awaited route over Simmons Mountain opened to traffic in August 1924, hopes for improved connectivity were high (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Aug 9, 1934). It took years to build and provided a valuable link between Mercer and McDowell, but less than one year after opening, it was reviled and in disrepair (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Mar 1, 1925).

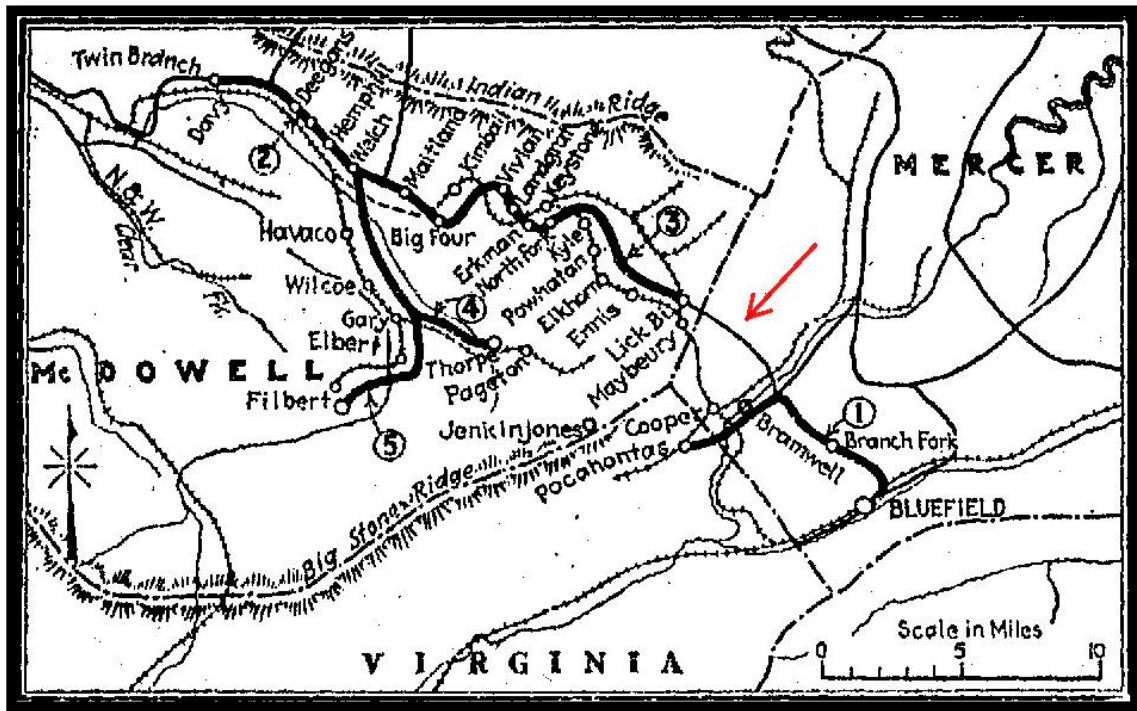


Figure 6.1. Black Diamond Route. Modified from *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* February 22, 1925.

Some blamed heavy trucks (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Mar 1, 1925). Sharing the road with larger vehicles can be a dangerous, but when they hasten road decay, cars encounter them indirectly in rather material ways. Road deterioration is a material trace of those who used the road before, or as Lefebvre explained, “In space, what came earlier

continues to underpin what follows” (1991, 229). Others noted a lack of maintenance in the winter months (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* May 2, 1926). Like all networks, roads require maintenance to function properly. Indeed, as Graham and Thrift (2007) remind us, repair and maintenance are often unacknowledged aspects of everyday life.

During the 1920s and 1930s a multi-scalar struggle ensued to encourage the building of better roads. The Bluefield Automobile Club noted numerous complaints about the road between Bluefield and Welch and a common belief that the gasoline tax and license fees should pay for the road’s upkeep. The club countered that users paid dearly when using the road, with physical pain and undue wear on vehicles (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* May 2, 1926). The club contested the route, arguing “It is simply painful to operate a vehicle over it, and, with the great amount of traffic, it is a very costly proposition to all automobile owners, both in point of time lost and depreciation on machines” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* May 2, 1926). Cresswell (2010) reminds us that mobility is an embodied practice and such factors as comfort or the lack thereof are included in the politics of mobility. The jarring of bones as vehicles hit ruts and potholes demonstrates the interaction of drivers with current and past drivers (Edensor 2003) and the physical proximity (Urry 2002) between them. Road degradation from trucks and normal wear shows the importance of past and present rhythms of road space. The concept of “absent presence” indicates that disposal or the tendency toward obsolescence is a matter of degree and stages (Hetherington 2004). The concept of absent presence acknowledges that evidence of past actors can remain long after their departure. When drivers of overweight trucks create large potholes, those drivers are present even when

they are physically absent. Other drivers encounter truck drivers when they hit potholes, or swerve to avoid them.

Kinaesthetics and the Production of Road Space

In difficult and dangerous road spaces encounters with dereliction make the embodied hybrid (Haraway 1991; Whatmore 2006; Sheller 2007) of drivers, passengers, vehicle and roadway all the more apparent. Sheller suggests “Driving can be described as a practice that intertwines and *mixes* the human and the inhuman, the person and the thing, the material and the informational” (2007, 177 italics in original). The jarring effects of pain and damage to vehicles were viewed as rather material signs of the road’s horrible state. In “Travelling Vulnerabilities: Mobile Timespaces of Quiescence,” Bissell (2009) explores how kinaesthetics “contributes to contemporary cultural geographical understandings of the embodied experiences of mobility” (2009, 427). Patterson (2009) observes the importance of kinaesthetics and touch in his concept of haptic geographies. In her work on the emotions of car travel, Sheller urged research to acknowledge the “way in which emotions are embodied in relationships not only with other humans but also with material things, including the kinaesthetic dimensions of how human bodies interact with the material world” (2004, 223). Edensor (2003) includes the awareness of “kinaesthetic pleasures” as a means of *defamiliarizing* travel on roads. Familiarity occurs regularly traveled roads, especially modern motorways, which are boring or lack stimulation. Edensor’s use of defamiliarization and kinaesthetics acknowledges the variety and sensation of seemingly routine drives. When roads are dangerous or

inconsistent, however, it is perhaps more difficult to focus on the pleasurable aspects of using road space.

Kinaesthetics as Politics: Nausea as a Political Tool

Kinaesthetics need not be directed at such light topics as one's self-awareness while driving. It can also be employed toward political goals such as road improvements. Urging politicians to ride bad roads is a means of convincing them to build better roads. In September 1926, Governor Gore inspected McDowell County's roads (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Sep 15, 1926). At least one editorialist hoped the governor's entourage would cling "to the sides of [their] ... vehicles for dear life" (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* May 26, 1926). Some took pleasure in reports that Gore had grunted occasionally when "whipped around" curves (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Sep 15, 1926). Local road enthusiasts hoped the ride and its "automotive emotions" (Sheller 2004) would prompt upgrading.

Comfort and convenience are part of road narratives that demonstrate the entwining of mobility and meaning with practice (Creswell 2010). Materiality is experienced and encountered through sensual performances that feed into representations of space and place. For example, McDowell road enthusiasts hoped to use nausea as a political force for change, believing if the governor and his entourage experienced the tortuous roads they would agree that the roads needed improvement. Crouch (2001) viewed practice and its mixture with embodied semiotics as "the feeling and doing" of spatiality. The materiality of bad roads interacts with the materiality of the body and one's ability to practice driving. By driving and riding those terrible roads, boosters hoped the officials would better understand what Crouch referred to as lay geographical

knowledge, the meanings and practices prevalent to those who use a particular space (Crouch 2000). Traveling substandard roads was a part of the everyday local knowledge exemplifying the entwining of materiality, meaning and practice. Lefebvre maintained that spatial practice or material infrastructure “secretes that society’s space” (1991, 38). Indeed, such “secretions” manifested through the materiality of narrow and winding highways and were inscribed with meanings including desires for safety. If the accounts were correct, some among the governor’s entourage secreted their lunches on those curvy, bumpy roads. The act of barfing secretes a society’s road space.

The Huntington-Chesapeake Bridge, a Faraway Link in the Route to Florida

In May 1926, State Route No. 8 was incomplete and difficult to travel yet it was still imagined as a link in the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway. Road space is imagined and practiced at numerous scales. For example, bridges exist at specific locations, but their materiality permits access that might otherwise be difficult. Consequently, bridges are imbued with meaning at multiple scales. R.P. Johnson, president of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association, exemplified this fact by attending dedication ceremonies for the Huntington-Chesapeake Bridge (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* May 20, 1926). The bridge served as Huntington’s only connection across the Ohio River until 1968 (*Herald-Dispatch* 2011). For Johnson, no doubt, the bridge was a material and symbolic link connecting Ohio to the coalfields and beyond. Johnson telegraphed boosters in Bluefield to drum up support and urged them to send delegates for the opening (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* May 20, 1926). In its report on the dedication and Johnson’s telegram, the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* admitted “perhaps, the event means

more to this section than many had supposed” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* May 20, 1926). The article named the bridge an “important link” connecting the Lakes and Florida. (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* May 20, 1926). At a small scale the bridge connected the local points of Huntington, West Virginia and Chesapeake, Ohio. Just one month earlier, on April 17, 1926, the Black Diamond line initiated its first route between Bluefield and Welch, marketing its service to those who feared driving the route (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* April 18, 1926). Given such fears and complaints about the road between Bluefield and Welch, it is no surprise that few considered the opening of a bridge more than 170 miles away to be a noteworthy event. Johnson promoted a grander vision of the route as a nationally important highway when it was barely complete at more local scales. This episode illustrates the multi-scalar nature of roads. Roads that connect distant places often connect local places as well. Johnson and other Great Lakes-to-Highway boosters balanced local and long-distance visions.

Despite hesitancy to acknowledge the bridge’s significance, boosters continued work to include the coalfields within the route to Florida. Following the October 26, 1926 road celebration at Flat Top, Bluefield turned its attention to connecting the coalfields of McDowell County. The Bluefield Automobile Club urged “the completion of Route No. 8, better known as the Lakes to Florida Route through West Virginia” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 21, 1926). The club agreed that when Route No. 8 was completed, it would “be used very extensively for tourist travel, giving an entirely different view of our state and giving the motoring public an opportunity to visit and view the famous Pocahontas Coal Fields” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 21, 1926). Boosters believed the route would locate the coalfields amidst flows of tourist traffic, and

tourists would rush to visit the beautiful and industrious region. A small anonymous editorial in the December 2, 1926 edition of the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* proclaimed, “The completion of the Lakes-to-Florida Highway from Bluefield, via Welch and Williamson to the Ohio river is the most important movement before the people of West Virginia” (Dec 2, 1926). Road boosters convened in Williamson to discuss Route No. 8 and urge its completion (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Dec 5 1926; Dec 7, 1926). Attendees included R.P. Johnson, who discussed the route’s development over the past few years. The meeting also introduced the “West Virginia department of the Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Dec 9, 1926).

Ordering a Modern Road Space: State Route No. 8 Becomes US 52

Road planning progressed slowly and in April 1931 a protest developed over the State Road Commission’s plans to reroute State Road No. 8 through the town of Premier, near Welch. The change was deemed necessary to shorten the highway and eliminate curves (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Apr 5, 1931; Apr 19, 1931). Residents of Davy proclaimed that they wanted a safe road to Welch and feared being cut off entirely. In April 1931, The McDowell County Court ruled in favor of the route change. Besides the benefit of a straighter road, the State Road Commission favored the Premier route because its right-of-way was owned primarily “by coal companies, the Norfolk and Western railroad, and little trouble [was] anticipated in obtaining the right-of-way at once” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Apr 26, 1931). Davy kept its road to Welch but lost its place on Route No. 8. One month later, State Route No. 8 ceased to exist.

In June 1931, the route was officially incorporated into US Route 52 extending the federal highway beyond its previous termini of Indianapolis and Huntington to Bluefield (*Charleston Gazette* Jun 25, 1931). Some believed the route was destined to “become a main artery of travel with national highway markers” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jun 25, 1931). Others considered the designation “a real event” in the area’s economic development and believed route 52 would serve as a feeder for US 21 (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jun 28, 1931). By 1935, US 52 ran from Portal, North Dakota on the Canadian border to Charleston, South Carolina (USDOT 2013 b). Despite its status as a federal highway, many considered West Virginia’s section of US 52 unbecoming a through route. Politicians and chambers of commerce aimed to improve US 52 as both a through route and a local link.

Wells Goodykoontz, a former US Congressman from Mingo County, complained “The portions of the road in McDowell and Mercer counties, from Welch to beyond Bramwell are simply disgraceful” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Sep 12, 1935). Goodykoontz claimed travelers avoided Mercer and McDowell counties on their way southward and in his opinion it was better for them to bypass the route than “curse the state to their dying day” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Sep 12, 1935). In his mind, the route’s substandard materiality resulted in negative imaginaries that led travelers to take their driving practice and dollars elsewhere. In Goodykoontz’s opinion, it was incumbent to upgrade the route’s material shortcomings. Efforts were underway to improve the route, especially the section connecting Bluefield to McDowell County’s coalfields. Goodykoontz’s criticism exemplifies the multi-scalar production of US 52. Despite its status as a United States Highway, it was perhaps much more important as a local road

space. If bad roads deterred car-driving tourists, Consolidated Bus Lines used the region's fear as a selling point inviting those who feared such roads to arrive safely on a bus. In a 1935 advertisement it sought to attract and assure riders by combining the fear of curvy roads with a double entendre, "alluring curves" (Figure 6.2).

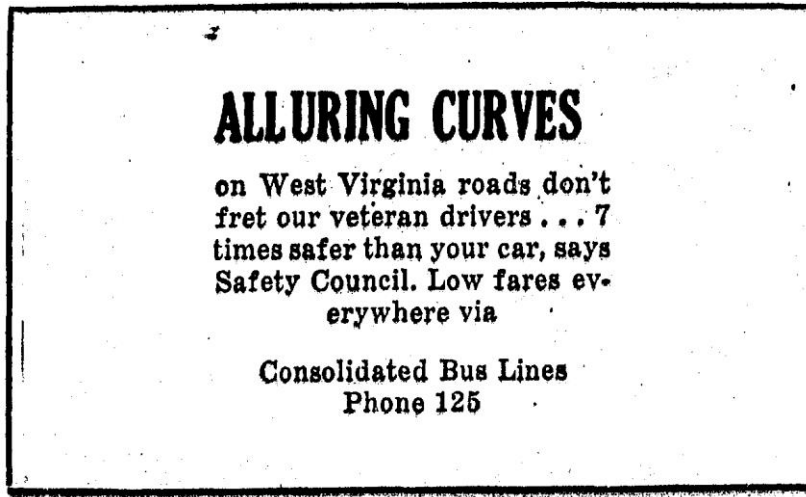


Figure 6.2. Consolidated Bus Lines Advertisement from *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, April 21, 1935, p. 3.

A Faster, Straighter and Safer Road to the Coalfields

During the 1930s, leaders in Bluefield and McDowell campaigned to improve US 52 between Bluefield and the coalfields. In 1934, Frank Easley of Bluefield and Hubert Clark of Williamson formed a US Route 52 Association with other road boosters to promote the development of the route (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Oct 27, 1934). Easley was a prolific civic leader and road booster, and promoted US 52 in his capacity as chairman of the Bluefield Chamber of Commerce's road committee. A long time agent in the coal industry, Easley managed the Pocahontas Coal and Coke Company of New York, and later became the president of the Bluefield Coal and Coke Company (NPS

1992). Easley's civic work includes heading Bluefield's Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, and Country Club (NPS 1992). He was especially interested in improving a route to the coalfields. Easley and others envisioned a new entry point into Bluefield that included new bridge traversing the mainline Norfolk & Western railroad tracks and bypassing "scores of dangerous sharp curves" and a dangerous, narrow underpass on the city's western edge (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 4, 1934). In the fall of 1933, the Bluefield Chamber of Commerce undertook a two-month campaign to obtain free rights-of-way for this modern entry point. Free rights-of-way would help to ensure the construction of the "important artery into the coalfields" (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 1, 1933). The new route and bridge shaved nearly three miles between Bluefield and Bramwell (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 4, 1934). In 1935, the Bluefield Chamber of Commerce sponsored a four-point road plan that included a new route between Pinnacle Rock and Maybeury (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Apr 28, 1935). The newly built section of road bypassed Simmons Mountain. For example, the bridge crossed the busy Norfolk and Western Railroad, and fit President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's "grade separation program" whereby traffic was separated from railroad tracks (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Apr 26, 1935). The link was local, yet national. Likewise, Easley contended the depression-era project would "employ a large number of people, and ... afford a safer and shorter entrance into the city" (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Apr 26, 1935). National road construction boosted the local workforce.

The new entryway into Bluefield included a road cut through Stony Ridge on the bridge's northern approach, a straighter road to Dolph (Bluewell), and the Cherry Street cutoff near the bridge's southern approach. The cutoff bypassed downtown and

connected US 52 to US 21 (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jul 5, 1935). Like much of the work on US 52, the Cherry Street cutoff was built with the aid of the CWA (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Dec 15, 1933). In January 1934, a steam shovel and 260 workers were dedicated to the project (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 4, 1934).

The Frank S. Easley Bridge (Figure 6.3) was dedicated on December 30, 1939 (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Dec 31, 1939). In his report for the HAER, archaeologist, Joel Dzodin (NPS 1997) summarized the bridge's significance to the local and regional production of road space. According to Dzodin the bridge was built "during the height of the Norfolk and Western Railway Company's importance in the local and regional economy" (NPS 1997, 3). In his words, the bridge "played a role within the region's expanding economic network by improving access along US Route 52, the old Huntington-Bluefield Road, and contributing to Bluefield's continuing importance as southern West Virginia's primary economic entrepot" (NPS 1997, 1). Bluefield was an entrepot in several respects. It was a railroad hub for the Norfolk and Western Railroad. Coal passed through Bluefield on its way to markets elsewhere. Likewise, the bridge helped to modernize Bluefield by providing a more grand entrance from the coalfields and shortening the time and distance between them.

Contesting the New Road Construction: The Disordering Effects of Order

The Easley Bridge improved access to downtown by connecting it more directly to US 52. Likewise, the new bridge permitted through traffic to avoid downtown altogether via the Cherry Street cutoff. During their construction the bridge and cutoff each faced minor protests. In January 1934, CWA workers temporarily withdrew from

the Cherry Street project when nearby residents complained of the noise from blasting at a limestone quarry used for base material. The contestation, however, was short-lived. The citizens voiced regret “when they learned the quarry force had been withdrawn,” and offered to search for alternate sources of limestone (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 14, 1934).

The bridge faced stiffer protests from Bessie Hardy, an elderly widow who lived at the structure’s southern end. The bridge passed her home’s second story, and obstructed her view. Hardy protested in the early phases of construction, but the State Road Commission offered her neither compensation nor a condemnation hearing (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Mar 3, 1937). In February 1937, Hardy sued Road Commissioner, Burr H. Simpson, and T.A. Loving & Company, the contractor for \$10,000 (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 20, 1937), equivalent to nearly \$160,000 in 2012 dollars (USDOL). In March 1937, the West Virginia Supreme Court ordered Commissioner Burr to “show cause” why Hardy was not entitled to a condemnation hearing to compensate her “for the inconveniences caused by the bridge” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Mar 2, 1937). Her space and sense of place were intruded upon by the bridge’s location just outside her second-story window. The controversy exemplified the multi-scalar nature of road space. A route may fit within a wider network of highways, but it is composed of elements at minute scales. Hardy’s home was also along a network that was not of her choosing. Eventually, the case was settled out of court in the spring of 1938 (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jun 1, 1938). Hardy’s home is pictured to the left of the bridge in the lower left foreground of Figure 6.3.

Lefebvre may have sympathized with Hardy's protest since the conceived space of planners and good road enthusiasts was imposed upon her lived space (Lefebvre 1991; Gregory 1994). Lefebvre condemned high-speed through routes, and exclaimed "A motorway brutalizes the countryside and the land, slicing through space like a great knife (1991, 165). Hardy's home exemplified Lefebvre's concept of representational space, in which "the 'private realm' asserts itself ... albeit more or less vigorously, and always in a conflictual way, against the public one" (1991, 362). Lefebvre explained that representational spaces "have their source in ... the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people" (1991, 41). On the one hand, there was the history of those who built and lived in the neighborhood near Hardy's residence, but there was also a long history of longing for road development. Those histories collided in the Hardy case. Hardy asserted the rights of her "private realm" against the very "public" Easley Bridge. Hardy's position as an elderly lady fighting the State Road Commission likely accounts for her story being told in the *Daily Telegraph* with a large photograph (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Mar 3, 1937). It is unlikely that her story would have been presented so sympathetically had she been a Black male or a poor white resident.

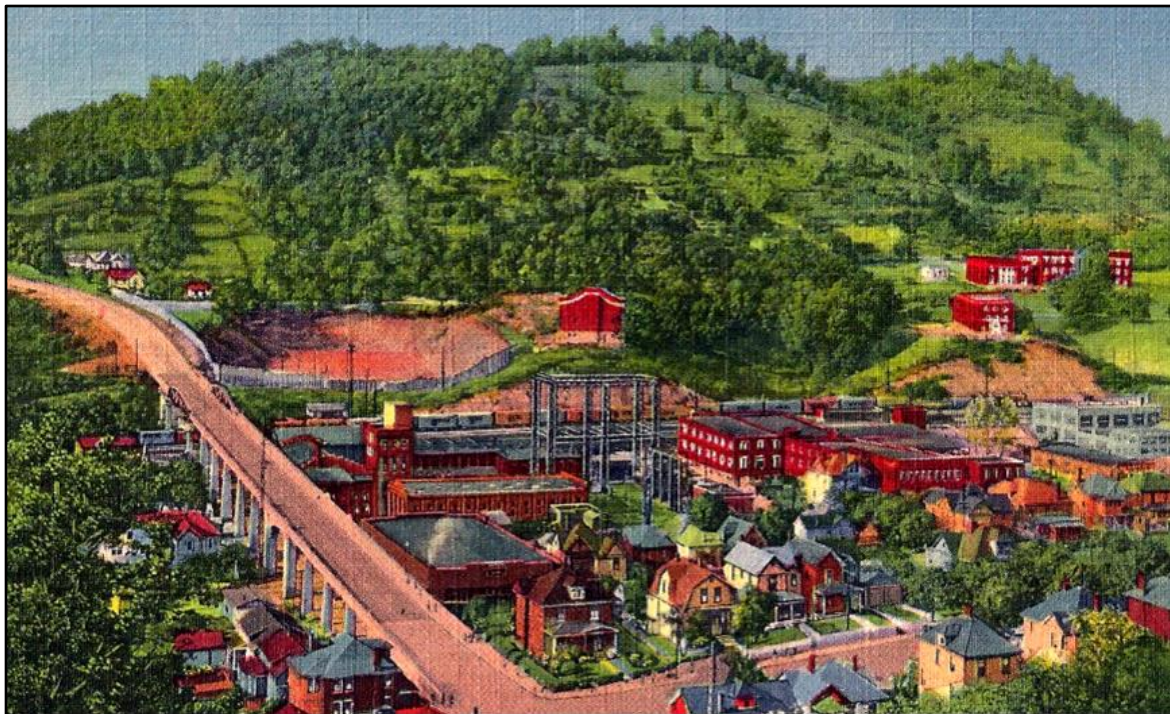


Figure 6.3. Easley Bridge. Undated. Adapted from postcard by Bluefield News Agency.

The Eckman Bridge: Bypassing Multiple Orders of Space

A second US 52 grade crossing project was the bridge over Eckman, a small coal mining town in McDowell County. Crossing Elkhorn Creek and two sets of N&W Railroad tracks, the bridge allowed automobiles to avoid some of the multiple and contradictory rhythms (Lefebvre 1991, 2004; Edensor 2010). One set of “mainline” tracks carried trains at relatively high speeds. The other set was used to “shift” cars (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 16, 1937). According to a May 31, 1938 *Daily Telegraph* article there had been multiple deaths. The undated photograph and map (Figures 6.4 and 6.5) show Route No. 8 as it veers across the N&W Railroad. The crossing sign states “Lookout Locomotive”. Figure 6.4 indicates two narrow bridges and grade crossings. The bridge bypassed “numerous sharp, narrow curves through the town of Eckman”

(*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 17, 1938) and children playing in the street (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 16, 1937). The practice of driving through Eckman led to encounters with people and machines undertaking various practices. Each had the potential for drastic and quite material consequences. The bridge attempted to mitigate rhythms that were incongruent with a safe highway. It opened to traffic in May 1938, an important link in what was considered a fast and modern US 52 (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* May 3, 1938). In the autumn of 1938, construction concluded on the highway between Maybeury and the Booth-Bowen tipple near Bramwell. The new road bypassed the disparaged route over Simmons Mountain and opened a “fast modern highway all the way from Kimball to Bluefield” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Sep 25, 1938). Kimball is depicted in Figure 6.7.

Keystone, another bustling McDowell County town, had a long history of fighting for road space. In 1931, citizens protested the “abandoning” of Route No. 8 when the McDowell County court ruled it could not pay “\$70,000 for less than a mile of right-of-way” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Apr 10, 1931). A compromise was reached by halving the road’s right-of-way from 40 to 18 or 20 feet (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Apr 26, 1931). In 1938, Dead Man’s Cut, “a narrow defile” separating Keystone and Northfork, was widened to improve US 52 and the access between two largely African American centers (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* September 25, 1938).

The *Daily Telegraph* lauded the straight and “graceful” US 52 showing images of an improved section (Figure 6.6) and Simmons Mountain road, pictured ascending to the right in the left hand image of Figure 6.8 (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Sep 25, 1938). Easley claimed the road over Simmons Mountain likely had “more bends and sharp

curves than any other United States highway in the state for the same distance” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Feb 27, 1936). It was believed that a new route would “shorten the distance materially, and encourage more social and trade relations between Bluefield and McDowell county” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Apr 26, 1935). Figure 6.6 depicts the N&W Railroad and a rerouted US 52 as it passes Angle tipple near Maybeury and bypasses the Simmons Mountain road in the left of Figure 6.8.



Figure 6.4 VT Eckman Grade Crossing. Undated Photo. West Virginia. ImageBase (<http://imagebase.lib.vt.edu/>), housed and operated by Digital Library and Archives, University Libraries; scanning by Digital Imaging, Learning Technologies, Virginia Tech. (accessed June 8, 2013).

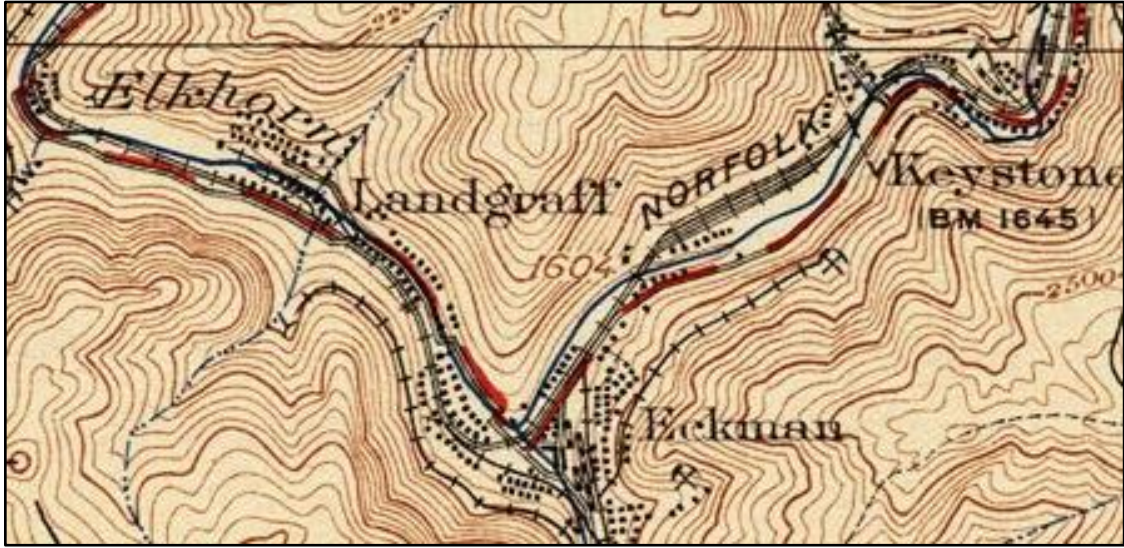


Figure 6.5 Modified from Bramwell Quadrangle. 1924. US Department of the Interior, US Geological Survey. http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/topo/west_virginia/txu-pclmaps-topo-wv-bramwell-1924.jpg (accessed June 8, 2013).

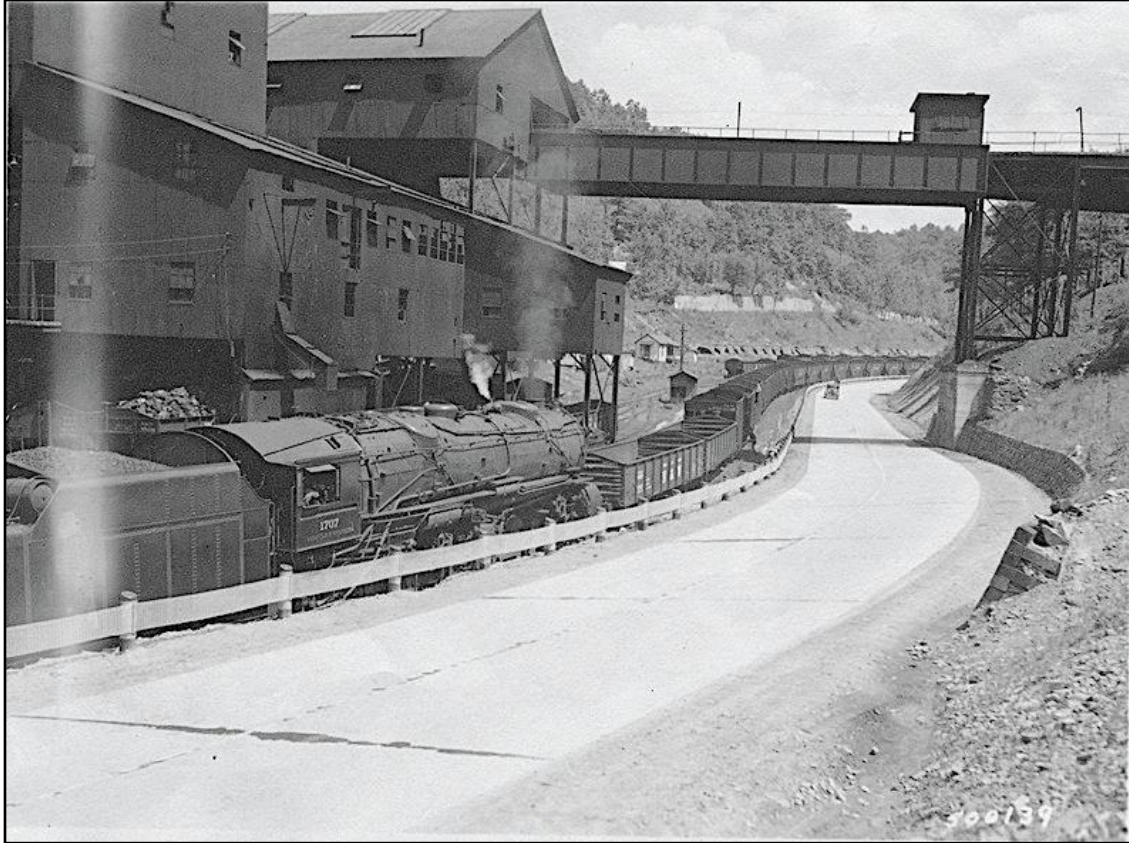


Figure 6.6. US 52 and Angle Tipple near Maybeury, West Virginia. 1939. VT ImageBase (<http://imagebase.lib.vt.edu/>), housed and operated by Digital Library and Archives, University Libraries; scanning by Digital Imaging, Learning Technologies, Virginia Tech. (accessed June 8, 2013).



Figure 6.7. US 52 through Kimball, West Virginia. 1941. VT ImageBase (<http://imagebase.lib.vt.edu/>), housed and operated by Digital Library and Archives, University Libraries; scanning by Digital Imaging, Learning Technologies, Virginia Tech. (accessed June 8, 2013).

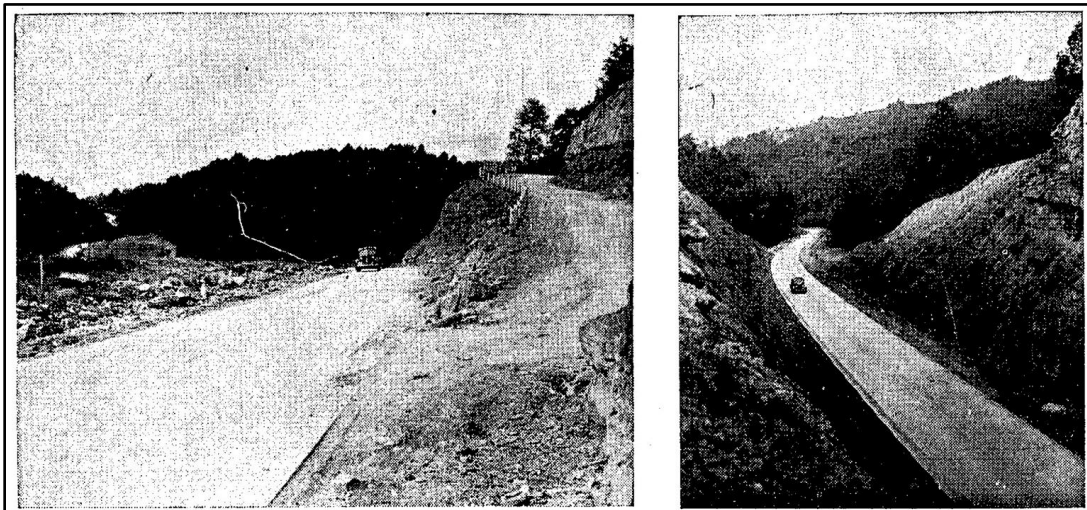


Figure 6.8. US 52 Near Maybeury. from *Bluefield (WV) Daily Telegraph*. Sep 25, 1938. New Link on Route 52 Gives Bluefield and Populous McDowell County Coalfield a Super-Highway.

Conquering and Preserving: Ordering Nature for Road Space

Road cuts (Figures 6.8 and 6.9) represent one of modernity's hallmarks, notably the ability to conquer nature (Gregory 2000c). Significant road cuts in the development of US 52 include the aforementioned Stony Ridge, and Premier, west of Welch (Figure 6.9) completed in 1932 (*Charleston Gazette* Oct 9, 1932). The decision to re-route State Route No. 8 US 52 through Premier was influenced by the purchase of rights-of-way from the Norfolk and Western railroad and coal companies (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Apr 26, 1931). Almost 200 feet deep and 800 feet long (*Charleston Gazette* Oct 9, 1932), the cut was hailed as a "man-made canyon," the largest road cut in West Virginia (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Oct 9, 1932). It shorted the road by half a mile and eliminated "ten very sharp curves" (*Charleston Gazette* Oct 9, 1932). Re-routing through Premier was predicted to save "the traveling public in vehicle operating costs and travel time" (*Charleston Gazette* Oct 9, 1932). Once again, the practice of road space is tied to its materiality. In this case, the materiality of the vehicle was also considered.

Overcoming nature is an important aspect of modernity, but it is not always looked upon favorably (Smith 2002). Conquering nature can also be viewed as destroying it. Pinnacle Rock (Figures 6.10 and 6.11) exemplified efforts to prevent the destruction of nature in the name of progress. Concerned citizens protested at least three times various attempts to blast or deface Pinnacle Rock for the sake of road space. In 1915, citizens contested a contractor's plan to blast the sandstone outcropping and use it as base material for a macadam road (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Aug 18, 1915).

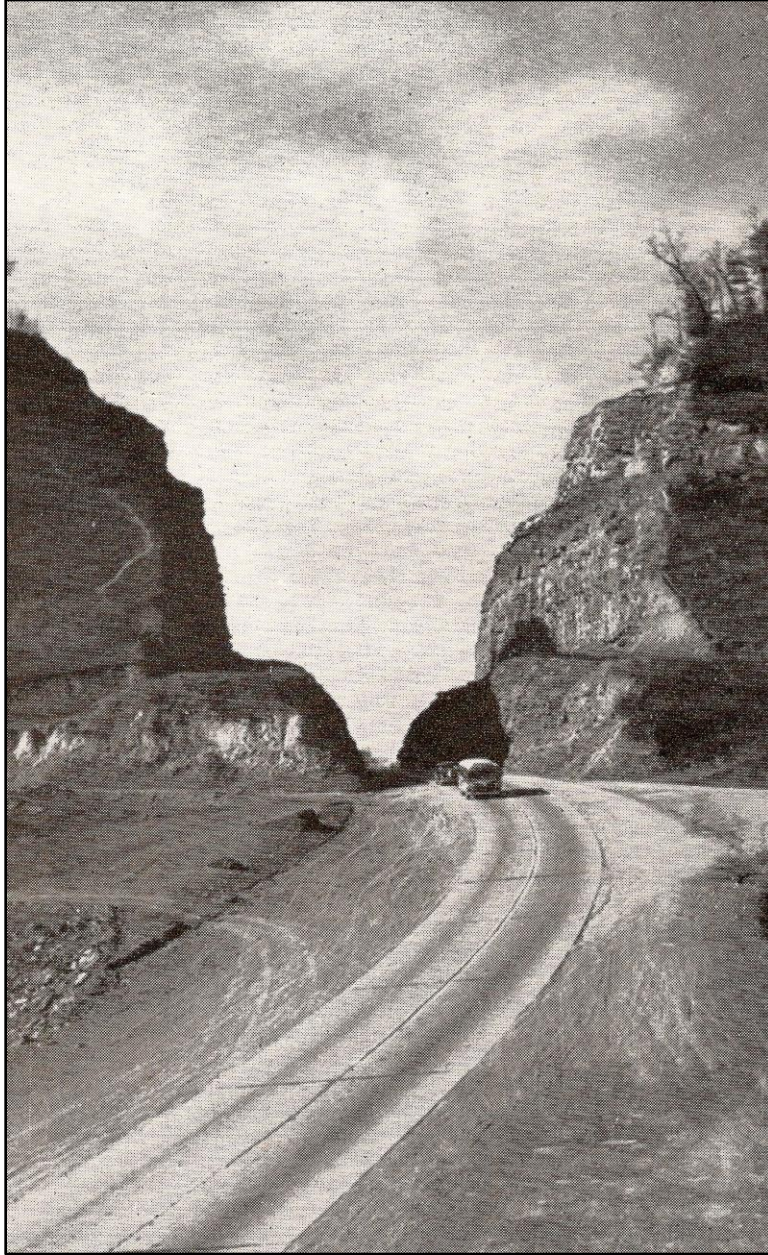


Figure 6.9. Premier Road Cut. Adapted from undated postcard by Welch News Agency, Welch, WV.

The *Daily Telegraph* recounted “The report is current here that contractors on the Bluefield-Bramwell macadam road have secured the great rock known as the ‘Pinnacle,’ near Bramwell, for the purpose of blowing [it] to pieces and using [it] as base stone for limestone macadam on this road. If such is true, it should not be allowed under any circumstances” (Aug 18, 1915). The protest centered on two issues, one aesthetic and the other practical. Aesthetically, Pinnacle Rock was admired as a “natural curiosity” (Aug 18, 1915). The debate concerned whether the rock was a grand feature of the landscape that was worth preserving. A more practical concern contested the use of sandstone on a macadam road as sandstone crumbled easily and limestone was the standard material (Aug 18, 1915). It was local knowledge that sandstone was not useful for a limestone macadam road. A decade later, preserving Pinnacle Rock’s beauty became a public cause when the Bramwell’s Women’s Club asked the Morton Motor Company to remove an advertisement “marring a beautiful work of nature” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, May 31, 1925).

In 1931, protests erupted over plans to blast Pinnacle Rock for the construction US 52 (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* September 26, 1931). Congressman Hugh Ike Shott, publisher of the *Daily Telegraph*, intervened. District road engineer A.W. Payne admitted that at least some blasting was required since the new road passed near the rock (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Oct 7, 1931). The State Road Commission announced it would lower the road instead of cutting Pinnacle Rock (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* October 9, 1931). In order to preserve the rock plans were formed to make Pinnacle Rock a state park (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Nov 4, 1937). The new park (Figure 6.11) opened in May 1938 (Pinnacle Rock State Park). Conrad Brevick noted “Straightening

out the road has left a practically level area below the Rock in which fifty cars or more can be parked” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Oct 31, 1937). A history of potentially destructive road building had stoked desires to preserve it and the re-routing had made room for parking.



Figure 6.10. Pinnacle Rock and Road Prior to Rerouting. Undated photo. Courtesy of Eastern Regional Coal Archives.



Figure 6.11. US 52 and Pinnacle Rock State Park. VT ImageBase (<http://imagebase.lib.vt.edu/>), housed and operated by Digital Library and Archives, University Libraries; scanning by Digital Imaging, Learning Technologies, Virginia Tech. (accessed June 8, 2013).

The Highway Struggle that Time Forgot

During the 1920s and 1930s, State Route No. 8/US 52 developed out of struggles for modern road space through the coalfields. It was intended as a link in the Lakes-to-Florida Highway but became an indispensable inter-county highway. This chapter has explored three predominant themes in the production of US Route 52: taskscapes; kinaesthetics; and multiple orderings of space. Each concept shows that roads are not merely imagined but are material and practiced. Taskscapes and kinaesthetics illustrate the route as a site of political struggle for economic control and highway improvements.

Before the “super-highway” that was US 52, the road was a battlefield of transportation interests. Taxi drivers and a bus line fought over rights to haul passengers. Road boosters exhorted politicians to ride McDowell roads and experience the jarring fear and nausea many experienced regularly.

The road was also a site of consumption; the Black Diamond and Consolidated Bus Lines each capitalized on the dangerous route by promoting the safer alternative of bus travel. Pinnacle Rock was a site of consumption in another sense. Some viewed the monolith as a source of material to be consumed for road space while others advocated its importance as a scenic landscape. Road space is both material and imagined. The monolith represented multiple orderings of space, and many protested marring the rock for a faster and straighter highway. The Easley Bridge, another site of contention, showed that avoiding multiple orderings of space can promote senses of disorder for others.

In recent years, many have decried US 52 as “the highway that time forgot” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Apr 13, 2013; Aug 2, 2012; Oct 24, 2010). The epithet implies that the world progresses and that US 52 remains stuck in time, a dangerous highway built for another era. Such derision belies the fact that US 52 was hailed as a “Super-Highway” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Sep 25, 1938). Indeed, it might be more appropriate to name US 52 the super-highway that time forgot. Despite its shortcomings, it improved travel between Mercer and McDowell immensely. As Cresswell reminds us, it is important to explore past mobilities to better understand and appreciate present ones (2010). When compared to its previous state, the route may have indeed been a “super-highway.” At the same time though, examining the histories and politics of US 52 sheds

light on the struggles, hopes, and fears of its road space. In this sense, US 52 is also a site of contestation interweaving its imaginations of road development in the 1920s and 1930s through to the present. Exploring its “obscure origins and enigmatic evolution” (Raitz and O’Malley 2012, 47) reveals that time did not forget US 52, but rather connected it to the present via a haunting chorus of complaints. Time did not forget the route, and neither did geography. The multi-scalar fights for a route to Florida and an inter-county road space highlights that people in many times and places desired reliable and safe roads even if their ideals of road space differed.

Chapter 7

Incorporating a Contested Two-lane

Turnpike into the Modern Interstate Highway System

This chapter explores entwined geographical imaginations of the West Virginia Turnpike and Interstate 77 from the 1950s to the 1970s. Launched just prior to the Interstate Highway System, road enthusiasts demanded a safe modern highway. The West Virginia Turnpike Commission, however, favored profitability over grandiosity. The battle intensified when the turnpike's corridor became the likely path for I-77. As with US 21 and the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway, West Virginia's efforts to develop a north-south turnpike and interstate were complicated by changing and conflicting orderings of road space. Many travel the West Virginia Turnpike and I-77 through without realizing its "obscure origins and enigmatic evolution" (Raitz and O'Malley 2012, 47). This chapter explores those origins and evolution within the context of the politics of routing. One set of debates involved conflicting geographical imaginations of road space, opposing definitions of turnpikes and highways, and clashing political ordering such as the laws and ideologies of how best to fund their amalgamation. A second set of debates concerned routing I-77 south of the turnpike and pitted the long-established Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association representing US 21 against a group favoring Virginia's State Route 100.

This chapter continues two themes from the two previous chapters: the materiality, meaning and practice of road space, and the continued political influence of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association. As I describe below, the turnpike fell

short of its critics' ideals, and these deficiencies made incorporating the turnpike into Interstate 77 challenging. The turnpike's inferior materiality greatly affected its meaning and practice. Conflicts over the fundamental definitions of through routes, and the ideological and political disagreements of how to fund highway construction further demonstrated how meanings drastically affect the materiality and practice of road space. The West Virginia Turnpike and Interstate 77 were more than just spaces to drive. They were spaces on which various places set their economic and cultural hopes. As Staeheli and Mitchell observed, "Economic development politics – whether at the level of the building, block, neighborhood, city, or region – entail the remaking of place at their core (2009, 186). Because they are such familiar aspects of daily life, highways are often taken for granted (Edensor 2003), but roads have deeply political stories to tell (Cresswell 2010; Merriman 2007). This section tells stories of the West Virginia Turnpike and I-77, and the struggle for modern road space. In the first section of this chapter, I explore disputes over planning and building the turnpike. In the second section of this chapter, I examine contests over I-77's routing and efforts to integrate the turnpike into the Interstate Highway System.

The Turnpike's Northern Terminus

From its initial planning stages the West Virginia Turnpike was a contested road space. One early controversy involved where to place the route's termini. Many preferred a turnpike stretching entirely across the state from north to south between Bluefield, West Virginia's southern gateway, and Chester in the state's northern panhandle (*Charleston Gazette* Jun 17, 1951). Howard, Needles, Tammen & Bergendoff,

the turnpike commission's consulting engineers, insisted the highway should terminate at Princeton in the south and in the Charleston at the north. Many opposed the engineers' representation of road space because it would have gutted a busy section of Charleston, and increased traffic congestion with vehicles entering and exiting the turnpike (*Charleston Gazette* May 4, 1952). John Cork, acting chairman of Charleston's city planning commission, warned such a terminus would "break-through established urban areas" (*Charleston Daily Mail* May 1, 1952). Critics insisted the engineers' vision would disrupt daily practice, the "established" flows and rhythms of traffic (Allen 1998; Crang 2001; Edensor 2010). As Daniels (2011) observed, just where a geographical imagination is established materially is of critical importance. The engineers, for example, would have established their geographical imaginations in the heart of busy Charleston.

The Charleston Chamber of Commerce contested the engineers' plan in terms of definition and purpose, or if phrased another way through meaning and practice. The chamber maintained that turnpikes were meant, "primarily to accommodate long haul through traffic" and should therefore by-pass cities (*Charleston Gazette* Apr 8, 1952). Appealing to a conceived space of numbers (Lefebvre 1991), the engineers insisted that their plan was more logical than bypassing the city. The engineering firm's Enoch R. Needles explained the logic of placing the terminus in Charleston, insisting that avoiding "built-up traffic areas defeats the concept that ... any expressway should be as near traffic movements as possible" (*Charleston Daily Mail* May 8, 1952). Both the chamber of commerce and the engineers appealed to meaning. The former conveyed the route's perceived purpose as a through route that should skirt around the city. Conversely, the

engineers appealed to a logical conception of space by locating it where traffic was heavy. In May 1952, the West Virginia Turnpike Commission yielded to critics and placed the terminus beyond Charleston's city limits at a point near Campbell's Creek (*Raleigh Register* May 23, 1952). It was an early and rare victory for the Turnpike Commission's more idealistic opposition.

Two-Lane v. Four-Lane

A second debate concerned whether the turnpike should have two or four lanes. The controversy exemplified that road space is not simply a physical means of conveyance, but rather is open to conflicting interpretations of its meaning (Cresswell 2010). The road's materiality also facilitated and hindered various forms of practice, showing that materiality, meaning and practice are indelibly intertwined. Four-lane advocates considered the embodied practice of driving a two-lane highway far more uncomfortable and dangerous than dictated by modern embodied dispositions (Sheller 2004). To phrase their contestation in Sheller's words, a two-lane turnpike would differ from expected "embodied performances of the choreographies of the road" (Sheller 2007, 180). Two-lane highways provide much closer choreographies as embodied practices of driving becomes entangled with others drivers and their vehicles. This entanglement is both metaphorical and literal with often quite horrifying consequences.

The two-lane versus four-lane debate was partly a fight over conceptions of what a modern highway should be and why it mattered to West Virginia. According to the *Daily Mail*, news of the "so-called two-lane highway" broke on November 1, 1951 after

consultants collected data and determined the feasibility of the turnpike (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jun 13, 1954). The commission followed the advice of its consulting engineers and financiers by demanding a two-lane turnpike (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 3, 1952) and claiming that the projected traffic did not justify a four-lane (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 2, 1952). Critics supporting a four-lane, however, insisted the 1947 act that established the West Virginia Turnpike Commission called for a divided, multiple-lane highway in both directions (*Charleston Gazette* Aug 29, 1952). Charleston Mayor John Copenhaver labeled the two-lane concept “poorly conceived” and a “toy two-lane” deviating from the grand modern highway conceived in the 1947 enabling act (*Charleston Gazette* Jan 19, 1952; *Charleston Daily Mail* Jan 19, 1952). In other words, he believed the two-lane concept failed to meet the expectations of a modern highway and appealed to the spatial ordering explained in one of the turnpike’s founding documents.

One of the commission’s more prolific critics was the *Gazette*. Frank A. Knight, the *Gazette*’s managing editor from September 1950 until his death in July 1956. During his tenure as a legislator in West Virginia’s House of Delegates, Knight authored the enabling act that created the West Virginia Turnpike Commission. It was perhaps no surprise then that under Knight’s leadership the *Gazette* fervently resisted the commission’s two-lane plan. A battle of conceived spaces ensued. As the enabling act’s author, Knight contributed to the turnpike’s conception of space as represented in the 1947 act. Knight labeled the two-lane concept “nothing short of a travesty of the law” (*Beckley Post-Herald* Aug 28, 1952). A *Beckley Post-Herald* lead story from September 12, 1952 accused Knight of “spear-heading the criticism” against the commission and

waging “his campaign through the Charleston Gazette of which he is managing editor” (*Beckley Post-Herald* Sep 12, 1952). However, as I illustrate below, Knight was certainly not the only critic of the two-lane concept.

Whereas Knight vociferously appealed to his authority, some disputes over the involved contested definitions. For example, in its March 9, 1952 editorial “Sound and Fury,” the *Gazette* criticized the engineers’ traffic study deeming the two-lane adequate and profitable. “How many intangible factors,” it asked, “have the engineers failed to measure, and is not the desire of the citizens one of those factors?” The editorial contended that the engineer’s definition focused on the measurable factors of conceived space without considering its lived space (Lefebvre 1991). Some supporters of the two-lane plan defended the concept by defining it in terms of financial interests. In its March 6, 1952 article “The Test of Soundness,” the Republican-influenced *Charleston Daily Mail* defined the road as a “quasi-commercial venture” and not a “dream highway of the future” as the four-lane proponents had. By condemning the notion of a “dream highway” the article condemns more the geographical imagination of a grand highway as idealistic. The article insisted that the ultimate proof of the two-lane plan’s soundness was that investors risked their capital on the project (*Charleston Daily Mail* Mar 6, 1952). The article fails, however, to acknowledge that economic speculation is itself based on a vision of the future, namely the desire for profit.

The *Raleigh Register* agreed with the *Gazette* over the need for a four-lane, but rejected the *Gazette*'s disdain as "over critical" (*Raleigh Register* Apr 22, 1952) and offered its own bare-bones definition of a turnpike:

The *Gazette* has taken the planners to task for calling the Charleston-Princeton toll road a turnpike when, in the *Gazette*'s opinion, it is not "super" enough to be classified as such. In all fairness to the turnpike commission, we think the *Gazette* should be brought up to date on a very old definition which in recent years has come again in general usage:

A turnpike is a toll road—nothing more (*Raleigh Register* Apr 22, 1952).

This definition criticizes the desire for a grand turnpike by offering a more basic definition situated in the minimum of materiality and practice. A turnpike is indeed a road that charges a fee, but there are also intangibles such as the expectations of the route's materiality and practice. Cresswell aptly observes "There is a relationship between how we use space and the material reality of that space" (2013, Kindle Version). Materiality and practice are inherently connected to how we define road space and our expectations (meaning) of the road's competence and performance (Lefebvre 1991). For example, in his series "Turnpike of Tomorrow," *Gazette* staff writer John Morgan voiced concern that collisions were inevitable on the two-lane (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 6, 1952). In other words, expected driving practices were not conducive to a two-lane road. Cresswell (2009, 170) expressed a similar link between materiality and practice observing "While it is possible to skateboard on park benches, it is not possible to walk through walls."

In a second article in the series, Morgan described the differences between the turnpike of the 1947 act and the engineers' plans as matter of idealism versus realism (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 2, 1952). As Morgan explained it, the idealist wanted a magnificent turnpike. "In his mind's eye," he implored, "the turnpike would be a

veritable aorta for the state's disintegrating arterial highway system." Such geographical imaginations envisioned the wide and fast highway and its high volume of traffic as a means of sustaining and channeling West Virginia's materially insufficient network of highways as if curing a case of congestive heart failure. Morgan points out that idealists were not merely looking toward the future were but also concerned with the present state. Furthermore, by imagining a better future and critiquing representations of space Morgan's so-called idealists expressed something akin to Lefebvre's (1991) spaces of representation but without the nostalgic sense of space and place that concept entails. Morgan viewed realists as more concerned with the conceived spaces of "reports from the West Virginia Turnpike Commission [and] can visualize only a disappointing approximation of the dream" (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 2, 1952).

In April 1952, development of the turnpike entered a new phase when the turnpike commission secured financing by issuing \$96 million in bonds. Another \$37 million in bonds were issued in March 1954 (*New York Times* Mar 8, 1954). The agreement between the turnpike commission and the bondholders stipulated a two-lane highway that could be widened when the need arose and the financing was available (*Charleston Gazette* Apr 5, 1952; *Charleston Daily Mail* Apr 5, 1952). Neither the bond sale nor the stated possibilities of a future four-lane calmed the dispute. Ground was broken and a short ceremony held on August 29, 1952, but construction was halted on September 11, 1952 when West Virginia Governor Okey Patteson attempted to force the construction of a four-lane road (*Beckley Post-Herald* Sep 12, 1952). Patterson referred the case to Attorney General, John Fox to investigate whether the two-lane one complied with the 1947 act creating the turnpike (*Charleston Daily Mail* Oct 10, 1952). The state

then asked a federal court to declare the two-lane project illegal (*Charleston Gazette* Oct 23, 1952). Judge Ben Moore, however, ruled the commission had complied with the spirit of 1947 enabling act (*Charleston Daily Mail* Nov 15, 1952). In his decision Moore considered the fact that the financiers “refused to pay for more than two lanes,” and that “future dualization was contemplated ... [and 99] percent of the right-of-way had been bought for a four-lane expressway” (*Beckley Post-Herald* Sep 2, 1954). In Judge Moore’s opinion, building the four-lane in stages preserved the spirit of the law and work could resume. The West Virginia Turnpike would be built primarily as a two-lane road.

Building the Turnpike: Scale, (Dis)placement and Politics

During its construction the West Virginia Turnpike remained a contested road space. In 1953 the politics of road space and place became all the more intertwined as communities just south of Charleston felt the brunt of displacement from the turnpike’s construction. Tom Cummings of the *Daily Mail* reported that “more than 200 homes” would be moved or destroyed disrupting the lives of “hundreds [of] families” along a ten mile stretch (*Charleston Daily Mail* May 23, 1953). The perceived and lived spaces of the communities would be razed for the conceived space of the turnpike. In a quite material way, the imagined space of engineers erased preexisting places. Accompanying photographs revealed homes in various states of wreckage with a caption explaining that the images depict “some of the physical changes” undertaken for the highway. Some of the homes, it stated, had “been lifetime possessions of their owners.” Cummings exclaimed “Whole communities are being devastated—all in the name of progress” (*Charleston Daily Mail* May 23, 1953).

In another article documenting the destructive nature of road construction Cummings criticized altered landscapes in Cabin Creek, a site of violent coal battles in the early 1920s. Cummings observed that “Homes were ... uprooted in the turnpike’s path” as machines made “molehills out of mountains” (*Charleston Daily Mail* May 31, 1953). The conceived space of engineers and planners was imposed upon the communities’ perceived and lived space, destroying their own material situations. In Agnew’s (2002) terms, their locales (home, communities) were deemed useful locations (nodes, networks) for the turnpike at the expense of the residents’ and historically minded citizens’ senses of place. The imagined turnpike was forced on the communities’ spaces and places erasing their materiality and altering their practice.

Cummings, however, was not the only critic who documented the turnpike’s destruction and disruption. In a series of critical reports, “Turnpike Torments,” the *Gazette*’s Charles R. Armentrout uncovered some of the heavy-handed tactics that right-of-way agents used to purchase property. In some instances less-educated owners signed contracts the agents read to them and took their word that the contract was read correctly (*Charleston Gazette* Aug 30, 1953). Although the turnpike was meant to provide access through the southern half of the state, some faced the elimination of road access to their property. As Agnew observed, “Transportation and information technologies create geographies of isolation and accessibility that draw places differentially into wider networks of communication” (2002, 23).

The *Daily Mail* and *Gazette* each covered the case of E.M. McConihay, an 81-year old Winifrede resident whose loss of property along the turnpike corridor eliminated access to all existing roads (*Charleston Gazette* Jul 11, 1953). In July 1953 the Kanawha

County circuit court ruled the turnpike commission could condemn the property (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jul 12, 1953). According to the *Gazette*, Judge Frank Taylor cited the 1947 act creating the turnpike commission and the authority it was granted “to acquire land in the name of the state,” and in Taylor’s opinion McConihay would be compensated fairly according to the law (*Charleston Gazette* Jul 11, 1953). The conceived space of the law and the court evaluated and attempted to compensate McConihay for his material losses, but not without disrupting McConihay’s locale. McConihay’s space was “annihilated” by law (Mitchell 1997). Perhaps few think about losses of homes and private property when traveling I-77 or the West Virginia Turnpike. It matters how the common good is achieved. Indeed, progress does not simply happen, but is achieved through the displacement, and at the very least, inconvenience of others.

A Small Look at Small Scale

The displacement of people and property highlights the fact that the production of road space affects life at numerous scales. A highway’s conceived space may stretch one mile or one thousand miles, but its materiality concerns points and people all along the way. Agnew fittingly suggests “It is not so much the separate scales as the material and discursive balance between them that determines the constitution and effects of political power” (2001, 17). The turnpike was conceived as a means to connect, cities, regions and the nation. At such a large scale it is easy to discount that a small house along the path may have meant the world to those who lived there. The legislative and judicial institutions that award fair compensation work at larger scales but when their imaginative

or discursive interpretations are handed down they affect place and space at much smaller scales.

In 1954 the West Virginia Turnpike (Figure 7.1) opened to the public in two phases. The southern section from Princeton to Beckley opened on September 2, 1954 (*Charleston Daily Mail* Sep 2, 1954). The northern leg between Beckley and Charleston opened on November 8, 1954 (*Charleston Daily Mail* Nov 7, 1954). A *New York Times* article covering the turnpike's November 1954 opening demonstrated that our senses of definition and geographical imagination mislead if we pay little mind to scale. The article posits "On a map this toll highway gives the appearance of a 'road that leads to nowhere'—but actually it is on the most direct route for the busy traffic between the Great Lakes and Florida" (*New York Times* Nov 14, 1954). The article explained that at a much larger scale the highway appeared to connect two inconsequential cities, yet at a smaller scale the highway's importance stands with the distance between Charleston and Princeton shortened by 22 miles and saving two hours of travel time. The route, it proposed, would help drivers who lived near the turnpike or practiced the arduous ride between Princeton and Charleston.

One factor that saved time and distance was the turnpike's 76 bridges and the half-mile Memorial Tunnel. Three of the bridges were considered major structures: the Charlton Bridge crossing the Bluestone River; the Yeager Bridge across the Kanawha River (*Charleston Gazette* Apr 18, 1954). As Cummings explained, the 500-foot Bender Bridge (Figure 7.2) that abutted the Memorial Tunnel (Figure 7.3) was the highest on the turnpike stretching 284 feet above Four Mile Fork (*Charleston Daily Mail* Nov 7, 1954).

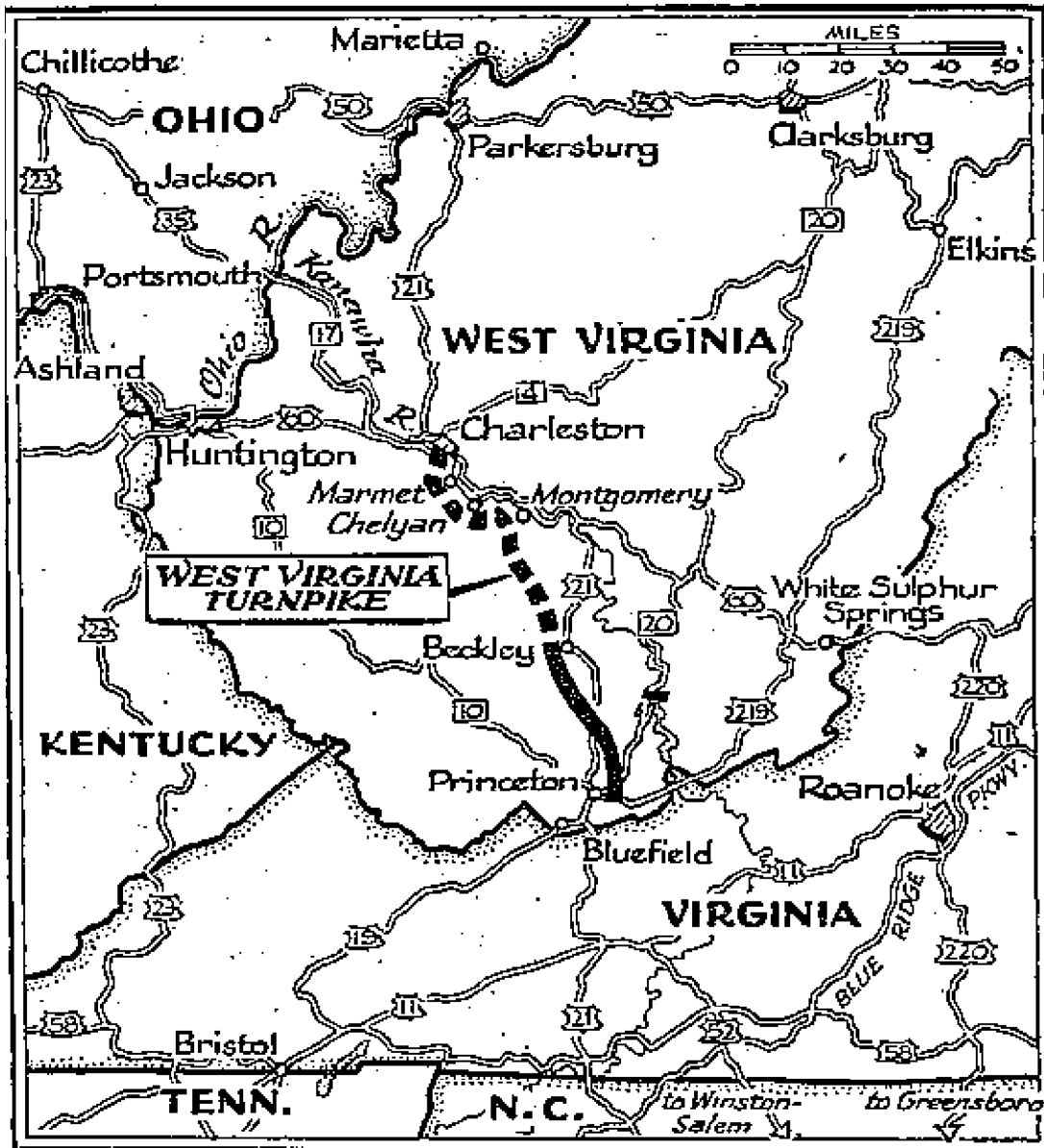


Figure 7.1 “West Virginia Turnpike” *New York Times*, September 3, 1954

Surveillance and Ordering an Ultramodern Road Space

The most complex project of the turnpike, however, was the Memorial Tunnel, which as Lewis Abbot described was the “largest single structure on the” turnpike (*Charleston Gazette* Apr 18, 1954). Nearly half a mile long, the tunnel burrowed under the mountain between Paint Creek and Cabin Creek near Standard, West Virginia. It was

the first highway tunnel in the country to be fitted with closed circuit television cameras and conducted surveillance on traffic inside the two-lane tunnel (*Charleston Daily Mail* Oct 31, 1954).

Surveillance is a facet of Lefebvre's concept of representations of space (Gregory 1994, 401; 2000, 646) that is intended to "(re)order the conduct of actors" (Henry, 2009, 95) or normalize subjects (Foucault 1995; Gregory 2000a). Foucault's (1995) concept of *panopticism* fits the tunnel in that its surveillance was conducted in a confined space. Among other situations, the cameras alerted tunnel staff to speeders and stalled or stopped vehicles, the cameras maintained the abstract space of safe and orderly driving practice within the tunnel's concrete space.



Figure 7.2 Bender Bridge, 1955 Adapted from undated postcard by A.W. Smith News Agency, Charleston, WV.

The January 11, 1955 *Daily Mail* published two photos of the tunnel's office where traffic was monitored. One image depicts one of the cameras mounted above the tunnel entrance and four television monitors. The photo's caption highlights the novelty of being on television when it declares, "Chances Are You've Been On TV – And Didn't Know It!" If you have traveled through the Memorial Tunnel, it proclaims, "you have appeared on a 'private network' TV." An accompanying column by Adrian Gwin presents the cameras as a modern and generally positive safety feature (*Charleston Daily Mail*, Jan 11 1955).

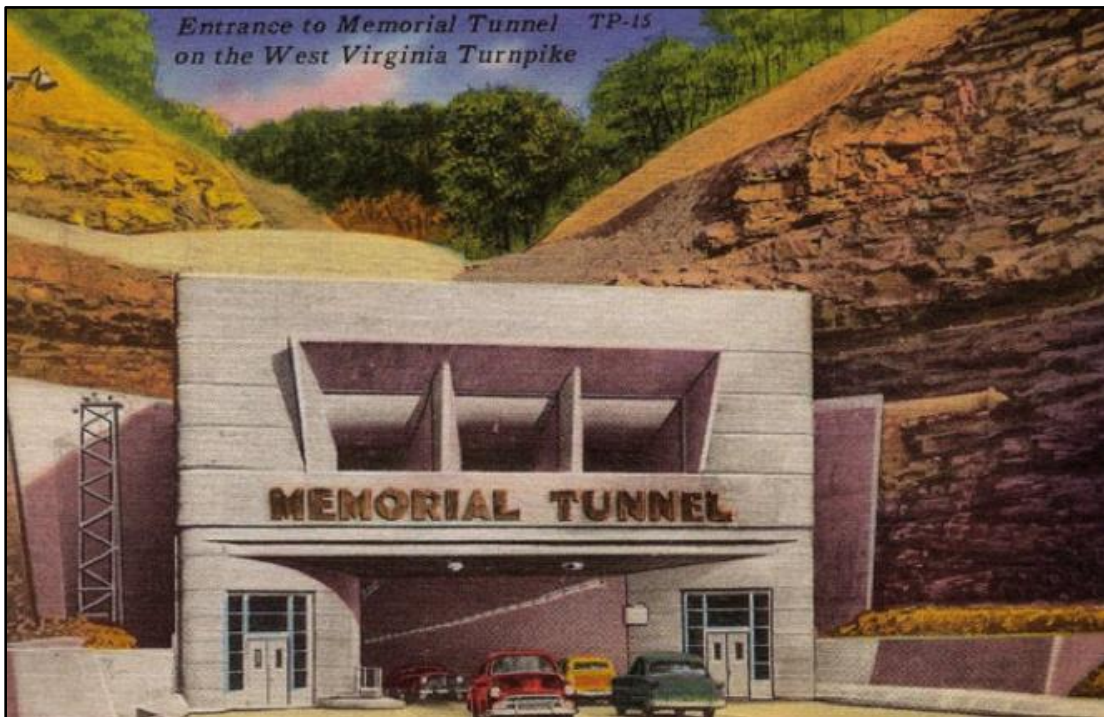


Figure 7.3 Memorial Tunnel. Undated. Adapted from postcard by A. W. Smith News Agency, Charleston, WV.

The staff, Gwin explained, reported speeders and kept watch over the tunnel. The cameras provided a modicum of safety but at the expense of anonymity. "You can't escape it," Gwin writes, "the 'eyes' see you, and a man is watching you. Every move

you make” (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jan 11, 1955). Graham (2009) describes the role of closed circuit cameras in surveillance as “oligoptic rather than panoptic, [because] they do not monitor all spaces and behaviors at all times.”

Not all considered the tunnel’s closed-circuit cameras a glorious modern achievement; some viewed it as invasive. In his March 1955 *Saturday Evening Post* article, “Turnpike to Nowhere,” Richard Thruelsen compared the Memorial Tunnel to Big Brother, labeling the surveillance system a “ghastly innovation” that “should afford the tunnel staff a new low in television entertainment” (Thruelsen 1955, 78). Citing Lyon (1994) and Graham (1998), Gregory (2000) observes that the dispersed nature of surveillance makes “Little Brothers” a more fitting metaphor and surveillance was not conducted solely within the confines of the tunnel. Six state police cars were designated to patrol the turnpike. Gwin explained that the tunnel staff had “police powers” and a police radio to alert troopers for assistance. On one occasion a driver stopped in the tunnel and withdrew a bottle of whiskey. Quoting tunnel staff, Gwin noted that the staff then radioed a trooper and “told him what car to watch for, where to look for what brand of whisky, and they arrested the man for drunk driving” (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jan 11, 1955). The tunnel’s surveillance maintained order and conceptions of the tunnel as a modern feat of engineering.

Like the rest of the turnpike, the tunnel was a contested road space. The cameras provided a sense of safety but at the expense of privacy. Given the tunnel’s length and two-lane set up, it was likely a useful technology but it was certainly a trade-off between safe driving on the one hand and freedom of the open road on the other. In the years immediately following its opening, the West Virginia Turnpike remained a contested

road space. What stands as modern is fleeting, but the West Virginia turnpike was criticized as backward from its beginnings. Despite the tunnel's status as a symbol of modernity, the turnpike soon required hefty upgrades to fit within another hallmark of modernity, the Interstate Highway System.

Extending the Turnpike to Nowhere to the Great Lakes, Florida, and Elsewhere

Though some considered the West Virginia Turnpike a road to “nowhere,” an increasing number of road enthusiasts envisioned it as a link in a broader network of highways. For example, at the November 1954 inauguration of West Virginia's Governor, William C. Marland proclaimed the West Virginia Turnpike a “middle link in ... a ribbon of concrete stretching from the Great Lakes to Miami” (*New York Times* Nov 14, 1954). Placing the turnpike within a location connecting the Great Lakes and Florida, Marland envisioned both the state and turnpike within a larger sphere of concrete connectedness. Efforts to widen and extend this “middle link” intensified as civic and business groups cooperated with government officials. As Wallace Knight pointed out, a few early advocates of extending the turnpike included the Ohio Valley Turnpike Extension Committee, which suggested routing it through the Ohio River Valley to Chester (*Charleston Gazette* Feb 25, 1955). The Western Pennsylvania Regional Planning Association proposed extending the turnpike to the Pennsylvania border south of Wheeling linking Pennsylvania routes to the Great Lakes (*Charleston Gazette* Apr 19, 1955).

Turnpike commissions from West Virginia, Virginia and North Carolina co-sponsored a traffic survey on the turnpike from Princeton to the Virginia border as part of

a three-state turnpike (*Charleston Gazette* Nov 19, 1954). One year later, however, plans to build a tri-state turnpike were put on hold when the feasibility study determined that the West Virginia Turnpike's low revenue and the expected income from an extended turnpike posed too great a risk (*Charleston Gazette* Nov 16, 1955).

Undaunted by the failure to attract a tri-state turnpike, the West Virginia Turnpike Commission agreed in December 1954 to ask the State Road Commission to finance a study of the feasibility of extending the turnpike within the state's borders (*Beckley Post-Herald* Dec 17, 1954). In March 1955, however, when Ohio considered dualizing its portion of the US 21, the West Virginia Turnpike Commission convened with Ohio officials to discuss options of linking the two routes (*Charleston Gazette* Mar 25, 1955). Some viewed Ohio's initiative at road expansion as cause for concern. In its editorial, "Opportunity Knocks for Turnpike Connection, but Action is Vital," the *Charleston Gazette* warned that West Virginia "may be left out of the Lakes-to-Florida routing" if it awaited Ohio's lead before extending the turnpike (Apr 19, 1955). Nevertheless, the West Virginia Legislature halted plans to extend the turnpike when the turnpike expansion feasibility study cited the "alarming costs" of financing the project (*Wall Street Journal* Jun 26, 1956). The study considered several lane and financing options for extending the turnpike to either Morgantown or Parkersburg, yet none were projected to earn enough revenue to pay off the debt of building them (*Wall Street Journal* Jul 9, 1956). Turnpike expansion had been thwarted by its uncertainty as a commodified space. The conceived space of numbers (Lefebvre 1991), in this case financial numbers, doomed the turnpike from expanding within or beyond West Virginia's borders. The West Virginia Turnpike's termini would remain between Charleston and Princeton, but its

relative location to other road spaces would play an increasing role in regional and national road politics well beyond its termini. The turnpike's failed expansion efforts, however, did not mean the route was not practiced beyond its termini. US 21, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway, intersected the turnpike at both its northern and southern termini, and influenced a revival of campaigning for the older route.

Return of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association

As it had during the 1920s and 1930s, the prospects of a new major north-south route would become increasingly entwined in the politics of linking the Great Lakes and Florida. In January 1956 the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association reorganized to “promote the improvement and greater use of U.S. 21” (*Charleston Gazette* Jan 23, 1956). For a brief time the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association considered the turnpike derisively as competition for US 21 motorists. The group claimed that increased traffic from the turnpike's Princeton terminus made improvements to US 21 necessary (*Charleston Gazette* Jan 23, 1956). As Cresswell noted, “Routes provide connectivity that in turn transforms topographical space into topological and, indeed, dromological space” (2010, 25). Topographically, the two roads ran closely parallel and shared similar terrain. Topologically, both highways were north-south routes vying for through traffic and revenue. Dromology, a concept Cresswell borrows from Virilio (1986, 2006) concerns “the regulation of differing capacities to move ... [and] the power to stop ... put into motion, to incarcerate and accelerate objects and people” (Cresswell 2010, 28). Dromology (Virilio 1986, 2006) relates to the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association's disputes with the West Virginia Turnpike. In April 1956 the group

complained that the West Virginia Turnpike Commission allowed tollbooth collectors to direct motorists around Princeton and Bluefield on their way to the turnpike. The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association wanted visitors to patronize towns along US 21, not speedily pass them by.

In another dispute, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association contested a billboard near Wytheville claiming the West Virginia Turnpike as the shortest route north, a title the claimed by proponents of US 21 (*Charleston Gazette* Apr 27, 1956). The scale at which one considers a route is important and exemplifies Agnew's contention that "geographical scales are intellectual constructs ... used to order the world in a meaningful way" (Agnew 2002, 17). US 21 and the turnpike converged in Mercer County, but each was located within larger-scale routes connecting the Lakes and Florida. The distance between Florida and the Great Lakes may have, indeed, been important but it was the smaller scale along US 21 through Virginia and West Virginia that likely motivated the group to act. Considering scale helps us realize that roads connect numerous places between termini. What is merely space for some may have deep meaning to those who gain familiar with a road through frequent travel (Edensor 2003).

Fighting for an Interstate at Multiple Scales

In June 1956, supporters of a Great Lakes-to-Florida route received additional motivation to mobilize when President Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 initiating the Interstate Highway System (USDOT 2013c). Wasting little time, West Virginia's road commissioner, Burl Sawyers, met with his Ohio counterpart in August to discuss connecting the two states by what would be a new federal interstate

along US 21 (*Charleston Gazette* Aug 23, 1956). With the support of Virginia's Congressman Pat Jennings, West Virginia congressmen Robert Byrd and Cleveland Bailey advised the Bureau of Public Roads that an interstate "through West Virginia connecting Canton, [Ohio] and Dublin or Radford, Va" via US 21 was indispensable (*Raleigh Register* Feb 25, 1957). The letter outlined ten points, from which I have selected the following excerpts:

- (2) The route ... would extend north and south through ... West Virginia and would be part of an Interstate Highway extending from the Great Lakes area south to Florida. From Charleston north it would cross the Ohio State line near Parkersburg. From Charleston south it would follow the Turnpike to the Virginia State line near Princeton.
 - (3) This route would have northern termini in the Cleveland-Canton areas, and would pass through the general vicinities of Charleston; Winston-Salem and Charlotte, N.C.; and so on to Columbia, S.C. where it would feed traffic to Savannah, Ga., and on into Florida.
 - (4) West Virginia has the lowest ratio of Interstate Highway mileage to total road and street mileage of any state east of the Mississippi River
 - (6) Possibly one reason West Virginians feel so strongly about their highway problem is that theirs is a mountainous state where the difference between a poor road and a modern highway is more obvious and the effect on economic development more serious.
 - (8) West Virginia is an important state in terms of war industry.
 - (9) The proposed north-south Interstate Highway from the Great Lakes through West Virginia to Florida is needed for inter-regional travel and commerce and the national defense.
 - (10) Since the Interstate System was designated, the character of war has changed.
- The letter presents the case for an interstate by evoking West Virginians' geographical imaginations, unequal interstate mileage and the new route's relevance to modern warfare. In terms of routing, it recommended cities roughly following US 21. In the years that followed, federal lawmakers would play a significant role in ironing out

differences among numerous conceived spaces. Byrd, Jennings and Bailey represent West Virginia's interest for road space by tying the needed interstate to multiple scales. The road would be a national highway passing through West Virginia, a state that at smaller scales lacked easy access to interstates. By stressing warfare, the letter ties the road space to the global scale of warfare and the national scale of the defense highway concept. Each is a representation of space that required material upgrades to road space.

Letter writing would be just one means of vying for the interstate. The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association campaigned heavily to garner public sentiment for including US within the Interstate Highway System. As Morgan reported, the group's promotional activities included a road rally featuring a beauty contest and speeches from Virginia's longtime senator Harry F. Byrd (*Charleston Gazette* Jul 7, 1957). An AP article published in the July 4, 1957 *Gazette* points out that the governors of four states, West Virginia, Ohio, Virginia and North Carolina, attended as did congressmen Pat Jennings of Virginia and Hugh Alexander of North Carolina. West Virginia Governor, Cecil Underwood, proclaimed that developing "US 21 into a modern super highway" was a "vital concern" for West Virginia and "a simple matter of life or death" given the turnpike's financial woes (*Charleston Gazette* Jul 7, 1957).

In October 1957, Secretary of Commerce Sinclair Weeks announced over 2,000 miles of new interstate routes (USDOT 2013 c). US 21, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway, would be included in the interstate system. As Stafford explained in his October 19, 1957 *Gazette* article, W.E. Stahl, the manager of the West Virginia Turnpike was optimistic that the turnpike would be included given the policy of not building "interstates parallel to turnpikes." Over the next decade its inclusion in the new interstate

would be all but certain, but in the meantime, a new battle ensued to route I-77 south of the West Virginia Turnpike. An editorial about US 21 in the October 19, 1957 edition of the *Gazette* anticipated the fight and cautioned, there is “Reason to Cheer—But Not Rest”.

The US 21 v. State Route 100 Fight for the Interstate

The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association feared the new interstate would be routed through Dublin and Pulsaki instead of US 21 and pressed the Bureau of Public roads to reconsider its routing plans and permit public hearings on the matter (*Mount Airy News* Nov 12, 1957). A heated quarrel developed between the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association, representing the “western” route, and what would become the Eastern Corridor Association favoring the “eastern” route via State Route 100 (*Southwest Times* Jun 12, 1960). According to the Associated Press, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association's president, James A. Williams, “promised an ‘uncompromising and beefed – up fight’ for the proposed western route” (*Charleston Daily Mail* Oct 29, 1958). Many Route 100 supporters “agreed that a great amount of political pressure had been brought to bear on the location of the super highway route” (*News Journal* Mar 28, 1958).

As Agnew observed, “Political power is exercised from centers that vary in their geographical reach, defining global, national, regional, and local sites of power of differing geographical scope and political intensity” (2002, 17). Powers at multiple scales promoted two opposing routes and a war of words brewed between the civic groups and newspapers in cities that stood to gain the route. The *Bluefield Daily*

Telegraph and the *Southwest Virginia Enterprise* (Wytheville) supported the western route (Figure 7.4). Bluefield and Wytheville were each located along US 21 and were well represented in the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association. James Williams, the association's president, published the *Southwest Virginia Enterprise*. This fact did not go unnoticed by the *News Journal* (Mar 24 1959) and the *Southwest Times* (Oct 27 1957), two advocates of the eastern route.

Route 100 supporters criticized the power and influence wielded by their more experienced adversary and at times avoided naming the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association. For example, the *News Journal* protested the "Route 21 Association" for its media blitz on the Virginia "State Highway Commission with ... letters, maps, propaganda and anything mailable to support their claim for the routing of the proposed Interstate Highway" (*News Journal* Mar 24, 1959). The editorial labeled the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association a "Four-State Chamber of Commerce composed of people catering to the tourist trade" and with financial interests in U.S 21 (*News Journal* Mar 24, 1959). By June 1958, the new interstate would be designated Interstate-77 (National System of Interstate and Defense Highways).

In his *Southwest Times* editorial "Letter Battle Begins on Rt. 77: Radford Chamber Passes Resolution," C.E. Richardson maintained that the letter campaign showed "no sign of abating" (Feb 22, 1959). Despite such criticism Route 100 supporters occasionally followed their adversary's methods. According to a March 28, 1958 *Southwest Times* article about the Route 100 supporters' "road fight," the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association had posted a sign on the West Virginia Turnpike "urging

tourists” to follow US 21. The Route 100 group decided it would be wise to follow suit and post a sign suggesting Route 100 as a better alternative.

Commission Hearings in the Two Virginias

In the summer and fall of 1960, the West Virginia State Road Commission and its Virginia counterpart held public hearings to explore public opinion on where to route I-77. Bob Mellace reported the announcement from West Virginia’s State Road Commissioner, Patrick Graney, that consulting engineers advocated one of two routings options from the turnpike to the Virginia border (*Charleston Daily Mail* Aug 4, 1960). The first and favored route was the more westerly one endorsed by the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association. It would tunnel through East River Mountain between Virginia and West Virginia. The second routing verged east from the turnpike to Glen Lyn and would tunnel north of Narrows, Virginia (*Charleston Daily Mail* Aug 4, 1960; *Charleston Gazette* Aug 18, 1960). Morgan reported that nearly 800 attended the public hearing in Bluefield, West Virginia that accommodated twenty-seven speakers, including two eastern route proponents (*Charleston Daily Mail* Aug 20, 1960). In September 1960 Commissioner Graney endorsed the western route to the US Bureau of Public Road, citing advice of engineers and wide public support (*Charleston Daily Mail* Sep 27, 1960).

In October 1960 the Virginia State Highway Commission held its own public hearing (*Rocky Mount, N.C. Telegram* Oct 5, 1960), with between 800 and 900 attending (*Statesville Record & Landmark* Oct 5, 1960; *Rocky Mount, N.C. Telegram* Oct 5, 1960). Over fifty speakers voiced their opinions in an atmosphere the AP described as “fireworks” (*Rocky Mount, N.C. Telegram* Oct 5, 1960). Eastern route (Figure 7.4)

supporters contended the interstate was vital for industry while some western route advocates from Virginia's coalfields maintained that the interstate would help revive their depressed economy, a "virtually cut off" region (*Rocky Mount, N.C. Telegram* Oct 5, 1960). Two months later the Virginia State Highway Commission voted 7-1 in favor of the western route (Figure 7.4) (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Dec 9, 1960).

According to Dan Rooker, many, including John Whitehead, president of the New River Valley Industrial Commission, wished to know the commission's reasons, to no avail (*Southwest Times* Dec 9, 1960). The Eastern Corridor Association viewed the Virginia State Highway Commission's choice of the western route as politically motivated. Radford attorney John Goldsmith contended "the act of creating the interstate highway system was not a welfare measure, yet the proponents of the Western Corridor based their case upon a plea that Southwestern Virginia was a depressed area and that the Highway Commission was controlled in making its decision by the plea of politicians supporting aid for this distressed area" (*Southwest Times* Jan 6, 1961). Despite such protests, the western option was kept and received federal approval in August 1961 when the US Bureau of Public Roads announced its decision publicly (*Charleston Daily Mail* Aug 28, 1961).

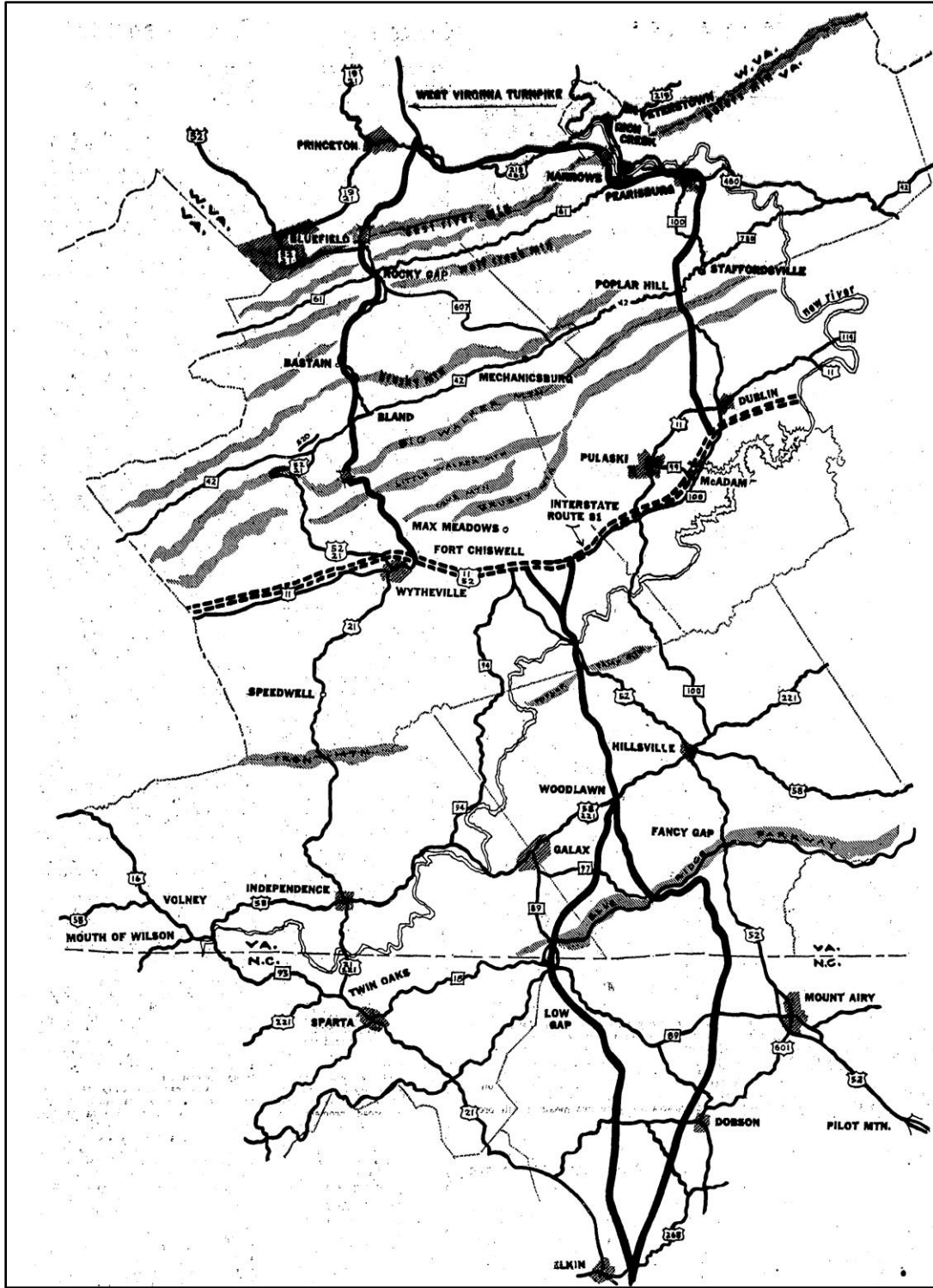


Figure 7.4 Map of Proposed Eastern and Western Routes *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*, December 9, 1960.

The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association played a prolonged role in urging the completion of I-77 through the Virginias and the East River Mountain Tunnel (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jan 27, 1974). In 1969, groundbreaking began on the East River Mountain Tunnel (Figure 7.4) near Bluefield, West Virginia, and it opened on December 20, 1974 (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Aug 18, 1974; Dec 21, 1974; USDOT 2013 d). At the time, the \$40 million project was the most expensive undertaken by the West Virginia Department of Highways. However, since the tunnel is nearly evenly divided between Virginia and West Virginia, both states split the construction costs (USDOT 2013 d). The longtime Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association official, Edward Steele, surmised the tunnel's unusual opening date so near to Christmas indicated "Officials were eager to get traffic off of dangerous U.S. 21 across the mountains diverted to I-77 before severe winter weather set in in earnest" (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Dec 21, 1974). The Great Lakes to Florida Highway had soundly shifted from US 21 to I-77. The tunnel also carried US Route 52 across the state line providing eastern half of West Virginia's southern coalfields a modern route southward.

A second tunnel near Wytheville under Big Walker Mountain (Figure 7.4) continued the Western Route of I-77, and opened in 1972 after five years of construction. At a cost of \$50 million, it was the most expensive highway project among Virginia's interstate highways (*Progress-Index* Jun 30, 1972; USDOT 2013 d). Introducing a presentation of *The Mountain That Moves People*, a film about the Big Walker Mountain Tunnel, Edward Steele proclaimed to a group of Bluefield Rotarians "The opening of I-77 could be as important to Bluefield as the coming of the N&W Railway before the end of the last century" (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Jul 17, 1974). Steele's words indicate the

enormity of the Interstate Highway System in geographical imaginations of mobility in southern West Virginia and southwest Virginia at the time. The railroad opened the region to development, and it was hoped that I-77 would spur further development.

Conceived Road Spaces: Incorporating the West Virginia Turnpike into Interstate 77

In 1961, the work and contests of routing Interstate 77 through the Virginias were far from finished, yet on April 21, 1961 highway enthusiasts were likely pleased with the front page headline, “Interstate to Embrace Turnpike: State Toll Road to Become Part of North-South ‘77’” (*Charleston Gazette* Apr 21, 1961). The enthusiasm was likely short-lived. A UPI story citing the turnpike’s general manager, W.E. Stahl, assured that reports of the turnpike’s interstate status were “premature” (*Raleigh Register* Apr 21, 1961). Throughout the 1960s the turnpike remained a jumble of conceived road spaces that was not fully incorporated into the Interstate Highway System. Legal and ideological representations of space over how to label the turnpike and fund its upgrading stirred contested politics of road space. A controversy developed when the State Road Commission placed interstate signs indicating the route was part of I-77 before it had been upgraded to interstate standards. A decades-long problem over how to fund upgrading would prove challenging without a satisfactory solution until 1970.

In its January 21, 1962 article, “Turnpike Eyes 15 Million Mark,” the *Gazette Mail* anticipated the turnpike would “eventually become part of the Interstate highway system,” but admitted its future was “a prediction not a fact” since it involved political and legal issues that Congress had not yet settled (Jan 21, 1962). In April 1963, State

Road Commissioner Burl Sawyers announced the turnpike's inclusion into the Interstate Highway System (*Beckley Post-Herald* Apr 26, 1963) but the matter of whether it was prediction or fact remained. As George Lawless explains, the turnpike was not yet an interstate despite its inclusion in the I-77 corridor (*Sunday Gazette-Mail* Jun 12, 1965).

Road Signs and (Mis)representations of Road Space

As Edensor observed, road signs “are part of the institutional matrix of everyday life” (2004 108). Merriman and Jones (2009, 2009) point out that the banality of road signs is often one-sided. Exploring the discourse of contested English language road signs in Wales, Merriman and Jones discovered that road signs are far from benign examples of “banal nationalism” whereby the State coaxes a sense of unity through common everyday symbols (Billig 1995). In the Welsh case, for example, the English language represented the colonization of Wales and aroused bitter feelings among Welsh critics. In his extensive historical and cultural geography of the M1 Motorway in England, Merriman (2007) uncovers the vociferous debate on the planning of its signage. The West Virginia Turnpike was another site of contestation over the meanings and actions that the road signs promoted.

In June 1965 the State Road Commission placed 13 interstate signs along the West Virginia Turnpike indicating the route as I-77 (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jun 2, 1965). The *Daily Mail* related that “according to the SRC,” they intended “to show that the turnpike has been taken into the interstate system, a practice followed on toll roads in other states” (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jun 2, 1965). The State Road Commission insisted the signs were meant to identify the I-77 corridor, and not present the turnpike as an

interstate. As tools for identifying they exemplify what Raento (2011) has referred to as *popular icons of political identity*, including such mundane objects as stamps and currency. The signs bureaucratized the turnpike as a space within the national Interstate Highway System. The State Road Commission contended the signs merely identified the corridor, or the turnpike's inclusion within interstate's territory but as Adams explains, "words make sense because we have internalized a *sign system*" (2009 128 italics in original).

As with the Wales sign controversy (Jones and Merriman 2009), protests ensued over the signs' representation of place and space. Representation concerns the meanings imbued about a place or space and how they influence geographical imagination (Massey 1995; Cresswell 2010). Some believed the signs marked the road as a freeway and complained about its tolls (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jun 12, 1965). Bondholders were concerned about the signs' meaning. According to Lawless, several bondholders prompted a discussion between members of the Charleston Chamber of Commerce and deputy road commissioner Vincent Johnkoski about the "turnpike's fate," to which Johnkoski replied that the signs indicated the route was a part of the interstate corridor. The "final routing," he insisted, "could be one mile or even five miles from the present turnpike" *Sunday Gazette-Mail* Jun 12, 1965).

From the state's perspective, the signs indicated that the turnpike was "destined to eventually become a part of the freeway system" (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jun 12, 1965), but many were concerned that the signs led to unsafe driving practices. Critics opposed the signs over concerns they gave drivers a false impression of the turnpike's road-worthiness, or that motorists would drive as if the turnpike was endowed with an

interstate's physical affordances (Sheller 2007) such as multiple lanes and wide shoulders. As Adams observed, "We see what we see because of some kind of "agreement" that occurs beyond the margins of debate" (2009, 129). In his column "As to Politics," *Daily Mail* writer Bob Mellace suggested the signs posed a danger to "unknowing motorists who believe our toll road, like those in other states, is dualized" (Jun 18, 1965). A similar view is offered in a January 2, 1966 editorial that suggested "I-77" signs influenced some less familiar with the turnpike to "realize tragically ... that they are not driving on a four-lane" (*Post-Herald and Register* Jan 2, 1966). Once again, the concept of "embodied performances of the choreographies of the road" (Sheller 2007, 180) is helpful for understanding the affective role of signage. It is also used to consider Edensor's observation that "the skill needed to drive in particular road conditions [is] shaped by [such things as] infrastructural-limitations imposed by the state, climate, driving practices and so on" (2004, 110). In 1965, 21 people died on the turnpike, prompting one editorial writer to quip rather morosely that instead of the Turnpike to Nowhere, a better suited name may be the "turnpike to eternity" (*Post-Herald and Register* Jan 2, 1966). The imagined and labeled road space did not equal the materiality or safe practice suggested by the signs.

The Signs Come Down

Citing concerns among his Raleigh County constituents, delegate Robert Sayre asked West Virginia Governor Hulett Smith and Road Commissioner Burl Sawyers to remove the signs as a step towards ending "the senseless, tragic unnecessary slaughter on our highways" (*Beckley Post-Herald* Jan 23, 1967). Commissioner Sawyers contended

the signs posed no additional risks and were been approved by the US Bureau of Public Roads (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jan 26, 1967). In terms of geographical imaginations of road space, the commissioner's argument valued federal approval. Sayre, however, was more concerned with unsafe driving practices than with labeling it an interstate highway. Sayre was joined by Charles Lohr, a delegate from Mercer County, who "told Sawyers he received complaints that drivers not familiar with the two-lane pike see the signs, think they are on a divided highway, and panic when they see a car coming in the opposite lane" (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jan 26, 1967).

As AP writer James Ragsdale described the events, delegates Sayre and Bowman introduced a bill obligating the turnpike commission to remove the signs and specified, "Interstate signs can be placed only on roadways officially designated by the US Bureau of Roads as part of the Interstate highway system. The bill also stipulated that highways be "at least two lanes in each direction divided by a median strip" (*Charleston Daily Mail* Feb 1, 1967). In May 1967, the State Road Commission removed the signs, citing the controversy as a determining factor (*Beckley Post-Herald* May 2, 1967).

Overcoming Complexity: West Virginia Takes Over the Turnpike

Throughout the 1960s, one of the turnpike's most complicated political questions concerned just how to overcome the legal and financial complexities to upgrade the turnpike to interstate standards. According to Lawless, Charles Hodges, the managing director of the Charleston Chamber of Commerce, considered the turnpike, "the most puzzling problem" facing the State Road Commission in the interstate program (*Charleston Gazette* Sep 12, 1963). Hodges's words were proven repeatedly as state and

federal officials worked set the legal and financial frameworks to upgrading the turnpike. It was commonly maintained that the turnpike first needed to be transferred to the state of West Virginia since it was forbidden to upgrade toll roads with federal funds (*Beckley Post-Herald* Apr 26, 1963). Moreover, the State Road Commission could not fund highway improvement unless it was “part of the state road system (*Raleigh Register* Oct 22, 1963). Creating a legal and political climate that allowed the funding of upgrades was a difficult undertaking. Among others, Harry Ernst of the *Gazette* and Mellace of the *Daily Mail* explained that two of the early options considered were purchasing the turnpike from the bondholders or condemning the turnpike (*Charleston Gazette* Dec 1, 1954; *Charleston Daily Mail* Sep 8, 1967). By 1967 neither solution acquired enough support, but the pressure increased after a two-year engineering study confirmed what many already knew: The West Virginia Turnpike was “the most economically feasible route” for Interstate 77; and upgrades were needed to improve its safety (*Charleston Gazette* Aug 23, 1967).

Competing Spatial Conceptions of Taking over the Turnpike

Through the politics of road space, conceived spaces conflict with one another. Questions arose over whether the federal government could assist West Virginia in the condemning or purchasing of the turnpike. After initially maintaining that it could not help with upgrading the turnpike (*Charleston Daily Mail* Sep 8, 1967), the US Department of Transportation consulted the US Comptroller, who sorts out such matters, and affirmed that “that the use of federal funds ... [was] both legal and reasonable“ (*Charleston Daily Mail* Sep 16, 1967). The Comptroller assured that he would permit the

process if the Senate and House public works committees sanctioned it (*Charleston Gazette* Jan 27, 1968). Ultimately, it did not take an official act of Congress to apply federal funds to upgrading the turnpike to interstate standards.

In January 1968 the public works committees of both the House and Senate approved funding for upgrading up to \$81 million (*Charleston Daily Mail*, Jan 26 1968). US Senator Jennings Randolph (D-WV) chaired the Senate committee (*Raleigh Register* Jan 24, 1968) and played a significant role in negotiating the plan (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jan 23, 1968). A group of West Virginians led by Commissioner Saunders sought the plan's approval (*Daily News-Record* Jan 24, 1968). Some US legislators voiced concern that it would set a precedent it for others seeking federal funding for toll roads (*Daily News-Record* Jan 24, 1968). To expedite matters, the House committee voted 19-11 against demands for public hearings on the matter (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jan 26, 1968). Opening the issue up to public critique may have complicated the issue further by adding even more representations of road space to the table, and bringing the turnpike issue up for public debate complicating the matter even further. UPI writer Margaret Kilgore explained that funding was approved as an exception to the rules and passed reluctantly (*Raleigh Register* Jan 26, 1968). Kilgore also observed that the exception would apply only to the narrow set of toll roads already within the Interstate Highway System (*Raleigh Register* Jan 26, 1968). In order to avoid controversy and countless funding requests the exception was applied to the smallest scale possible.

In his *Daily Mail* article of September 5, 1968, Tom Cummings reported that the Federal Highway Act of 1968 was signed, providing an avenue “in principle” for transferring the West Virginia Turnpike to West Virginia’s State Road Commission and

requiring “the House Public Works Committee [to] approve terms and conditions of the transfer before it [could] be consummated”. Some were skeptical that such a complicated plan could move along smoothly. Cummings noted that some state road “commissioners expressed concern that ‘complexities’ could delay actual processing of the plan (*Charleston Daily Mail* Sep 5, 1968). Though it does not elaborate on specific “complexities,” the word is appropriate considering the legal and political challenges that would follow. Federal lawmakers had discovered a means of acquiring and funding upgrades to West Virginia’s turnpike, but competing representations of space in the form of state laws and clashing political ideologies would complicate matters.

Controversy developed in September 1968 when representatives of Peabody & Co., a New York investment banking firm, met with the West Virginia Senate to describe a plan that would allow the West Virginia State Road Commission to acquire the West Virginia Turnpike (*Raleigh Register* Sep 12, 1968). The plan called for the issuance of special obligation bonds that would be “redeemed to the bondholders over a 20-year period” (*Raleigh Register* Sep 12, 1968). A major caveat was that before the special obligation bonds could be exchanged for the turnpike bonds, two-thirds of the turnpike’s bondholders had to agree to “voluntary bankruptcy” (*Raleigh Register* Sep 12, 1968; *Post-Herald and Register* Sep 15, 1968). West Virginia Attorney General Donald Robertson disputed the legality of the special obligation bonds, citing a “law which prohibits pledging the state’s credit,” a claim the plan’s sponsors denied (*Weirton Daily Times* Sep 19, 1968).

Ultimately, the plan’s constitutionality of special obligation bonds would be moot. Newly elected governor, Arch Moore, took office in January 1969 and opposed the

voluntary bankruptcy proceedings, believing it would hurt West Virginia's future bond opportunities (*Weirton Daily Times* Jun 10, 1969; *Charleston Gazette* Jun 3, 1970). State Senator, Bernard Crawford chided Moore's position as "political infighting" that held up progress on the turnpike. Jennings Randolph informed Crawford that bankruptcy was the only way to transfer the turnpike from the "bondholders to the state" (*Raleigh Register* Feb 12, 1970). Richard Grimes explained that State Road Commissioner William Ritchie pressed the state senate finance committee to "move quickly" to find a solution given Moore's opposition to bankruptcy and fears that the state would miss its chance to use federal funding (*Charleston Daily Mail* Jan 16, 1970). The plan was complicated further by an upturn in turnpike revenue and growing resistance from bondholders to forfeit their profit to bankruptcy (*Charleston Daily Mail* Dec 26, 1969). Furthermore, state governments and agencies grew increasingly concerned about how the condemnations would affect their own bond situations (*Raleigh Register* Feb 9, 1970).

A solution to funding turnpike upgrades amidst conflicting conceptions of road space was achieved in December 1970 through federal channels when, as Bob Mellace (*Charleston Daily Mail* Dec 18, 1970) and the AP (*Beckley Post-Herald* Dec 18, 1970) reported, Senate and Congressional conferees passed motions permitting the West Virginia Turnpike to receive federal funds while remaining a toll road until its bonds were paid. Once again, it required fashioning an exception that fit the West Virginia Turnpike, but left out other toll roads. To avoid the mess of multiple states vying for federal funds for toll roads, the bill applied narrowly to two-lane toll roads existing within the Interstate Highway System. There were just two such roads in the country, with the other being "a small section of the New York Throughway near Utica, N.Y."

Senator Randolph told the *Daily Mail* “This was the only way I knew to solve this difficult problem” (*Charleston Daily Mail* Dec 18, 1970). The “problem” concerned how to overcome laws and policies that prevented turnpikes from receiving funds when doing so required consent from numerous parties, including bond holders and state and federal officials. The West Virginia Turnpike could be upgraded to interstate standards without having to be acquired by the state (*Beckley Post-Herald* Dec 18, 1970). By allowing tolls on the interstate-turnpike, the federal government found a means of investing in the upgrading of the West Virginia Turnpike.

The West Virginia Turnpike and the Politics of Exception

As technology and expectations change, what is viewed as modern also changes (Benjamin 1999; Edensor 2005). Large development projects do not simply result from progress, but are contested throughout their planning stages and beyond (Jess and Massey 1995; Staeheli and Mitchell 2009). The West Virginia Turnpike was contested during its planning stage and remained a site struggle after opening to traffic. Materiality, meaning and practice each played important roles in the politics of the turnpike’s road space. A two-lane toll road amidst rugged terrain, the turnpike’s materiality fit neither the idealistic visions of its critics, nor the conceived specifications of the Interstate Highway System. Attempts to upgrade its materiality proved difficult and resulted in more than a decade of battles over conceived road spaces. Incompatible state and federal laws and political ideologies were difficult to disentangle. Indeed, it took longer to conceive of a way to upgrade the turnpike than it did to build the original turnpike. It was not until 1987 that the West Virginia Turnpike was officially included into the Interstate Highway

System. The opening ceremony was held at the “open cut” where the turnpike and I-77 the recently bypassed and closed two-lane Memorial Tunnel. West Virginia Governor, Arch Moore announced “An old era is closed.” Moore pronounced the upgraded turnpike “a modern highway ridding us of the tragedy of the past” (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Sep 3, 1987). The so-called “turnpike to eternity” (*Post-Herald and Register* Jan 2, 1966) was officially a modern Interstate Highway with at least two lanes in each direction. In May 2000, the tunnel was chosen as the site for the Center for National Response, a cutting-edge training facility for counterterrorism and weapons of mass destruction. In 2011, a site adjacent to the CNR tunnel was made the home of the New Advanced Mobility Training Area, a facility that provides instruction and practice to military personnel on driving armored vehicles in rugged terrain (*Register Herald* Sep 20, 2011). The Memorial Tunnel, the onetime modern marvel and two-lane anachronism, now serves as a modern training center near new two sites of “Advanced Mobility,” one for interstate motorists and the other for military motorists.

The West Virginia Turnpike, an Exceptional Highway

This chapter has explored how conceived spaces of the West Virginia Turnpike clashed with other conceptions of modern road space. The use of exceptions played a significant role in circumventing these complex practical and ideological disputes. The turnpike’s critics upbraided the West Virginia Turnpike Commission and bondholders for excluding speed, safety and grandeur for the sake of profit when they insisted on a two-lane route that differed greatly from common perceptions of modern road space. Likewise, the engineers made exceptions to their training by permitting the turnpike to

terminate on the outskirts of Charleston when their conceived notions of road space indicated it should terminate in the area with the highest traffic. Finally, Congress made exceptions to conceptions of road space by narrowly defining turnpikes that could receive federal funding. As these examples illustrate exceptions are exercised when multiple conceptions of space clash. Among other reasons, exceptions are made when dictated by finance, practicality, or for the sake timeliness.

It is worthwhile to consider Mitchell and Staeheli's observation that "resistance is not the exclusive domain of the oppressed" (2009 187). Exceptions are tools of the powerful, and while they may facilitate projects that benefit a large portion of society, exceptions are always political. The development of the West Virginia Turnpike and its inclusion into Interstate 77 involved numerous contests between competing conceived spaces and their material aftermaths. Along the route, communities were displaced. In the large-scale conceptions of road space these homes were simply locations in a modern highway project, but to the people who loved their homes and communities the homes may have been the center of their worlds. They were made the exceptions and were not allowed to make the exceptions. Controversies such as the two-lane versus four-lane debate involved disputes over the appropriate materialities of road space and how those materialities influenced its practice. Such contests were deeply intertwined in struggles to make West Virginia a modern place, and frustrations that the turnpike was a backward road space. The West Virginia Turnpike was an exceptional, albeit, exceptionally bad highway.

Chapter 8

Toward a Critical Humanist Approach to Road Space

The aim of this dissertation has been to explore the multi-scalar development of road space in the Virginias, with a particular focus on West Virginia and its struggles for a route connecting the Great Lakes and Florida. Road space is a ubiquitous yet uneven feature of everyday life, but recent mobilities scholarship has focused mostly on international travel and cutting-edge mobilities (Cresswell 2010; Binnie et al. 2007). From the 1920s to the early 1970s, the period covered in this dissertation, geographical imaginations of road development in the Virginias spanned the everyday and the fanciful. Much like the “new mobilities” today, road enthusiasts envisioned grand possibilities, but they also desired more mundane and local connections. This dissertation upholds the value of exploring historical and political geographies of highway development when some important north-south roads were first envisioned and debated. To explore the complexity of road development, I considered road space through a three-fold framework of materiality, meaning, and practice (Cresswell 2009). Examining past development helps us to understand where today’s mobilities started.

Materialities, meanings and practices change, yet much endures. Throughout the nearly 50-year period I examined a common theme emerged concerning demands for fast and safe roads that would shrink time and modernize the Virginias. Conversely, critics of road development complained frequently that failure to modernize roads or maintain them properly contributed to the region’s backwardness. Like much of Appalachia, West Virginia and southwestern Virginia have long suffered stereotypes as insular, isolated,

and backward. Modernity is distinguished by its enormous connectivity and rapid change (Nash 2000a). Efforts to connect the Virginias to the Great Lakes and Florida contradict stereotypes labeling the region as insular and isolated. Insularity involves a desire to avoid outsiders, but the region's road enthusiasts invoked a rather cosmopolitan stance toward the nation and region. Isolation involves accessibility, the degree of difficulty or expense involved in reaching to a place, yet road enthusiasts worked to increase connectivity. Exploring road development and its contestation counters such stereotypes by revealing endeavors to create "distanciated communities" (Amin and Thrift 2002, 41) whereby geographical imaginations of place and space are extended locally, regionally and nationally. In the Virginias, the region's mountainous terrain dominated its materiality of roads, and the practice of driving was frequently difficult and dangerous. Materiality and practice shaped the meanings attached to roads as drivers and boosters desired safe, quick and reliable roadways. Boosters, including civic and business leaders, vied for routes and bitterly contested proposals that did not meet their goals or expectations.

Road development is deeply political. Road enthusiasts fought to place routes through their cities and regions; their visions were contested. Routings were struggled over in courts, newspapers, and in chambers of commerce throughout the region. Editorialists criticized the loss of homes and property. In their struggles for modernity, road enthusiasts actively critiqued the size, length, and suitability of road projects. In the Virginias, the region's mountainous terrain dominated its physical topography, and the practice of driving was frequently difficult and dangerous. Materiality and practice shaped the meanings attached to roads as drivers and boosters desired safe, quick and

reliable roadways. Boosters, including civic and business leaders, vied for routes and bitterly contested proposals that did not meet their goals or expectations. By exploring the benefits and burdens of road space this dissertation uncovered ironies and unevenness of at multiple scales. Geographical imaginations evoked and invoked road space through a mixture of benefits and burdens that take materiality, meaning and practice into account.

Following a brief summary of the development of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway and its influence on highway development, I direct the discussion toward more theoretical concerns and contend that a critical humanist approach is valuable for historical and political geographies of road development. As I elaborate below, three themes exemplify my critical humanist approach to road development in the Virginias: invocation and evocation; embodiment; and inscribed rhythms. I contend that each recurs in demands and contests for road space and intertwines with materiality, meaning and practice.

Review of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway

The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway was not a single route and it did not terminate in Florida, but it proved a powerful imaginary that influenced the politics and practice of road development in the Virginias at scales ranging from local to the national. The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway spanned four phases of road development, including named auto trails, the US Highway System, privately owned turnpikes, and the Interstate Highway System. In chapter 5, I explored the creation of the Lakes-to-Florida concept. In 1924, demands for modern roads intensified with the creation of the Great

Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association and the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway Association, two road-boosting associations with North Carolina roots. The Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association and the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway Association formed at a transitional point in the history of American road development when named auto trails gave way to the numbered US Highway System. The West Virginia and Virginia portions of US Routes 19, 21, 52 and Interstate 77 each developed out of the Lakes-to-Florida concept. The southern portion of US 21 roughly followed the roads preferred by the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association and the northern half traversed the routes chosen by the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway Association for their trail. The southern half of US 19 connected Asheville, to Florida roughly following the route of the Cleveland-Marietta-Asheville-Florida Highway.

In chapter 6, I explored the development of the Tug River Highway (State Route No. 8) into US Route 52. Each had been envisioned as links in the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway. This chapter further emphasized that visions of road space intersect multiple scales. The Black Diamond and Consolidated bus lines indicated a thriving mobility culture that was hindered by inadequate roads. Physical topographies made driving and building roads difficult. There was a high demand for roads linking Bluefield and the lucrative McDowell County coalfields, but as protests over Pinnacle Rock illustrate, preserving the natural landscape was politically pressing. Despite its inadequacies as a through route, US Route 52 served as an important highway between the coalfields of McDowell County and the large commercial center of Bluefield in Mercer County, where it joined US 21.

In chapter 7, I examined efforts to include the West Virginia Turnpike and the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway into the Interstate Highway System. During the 1950s, proponents envisioned the West Virginia Turnpike as means of modernizing West Virginia with a state-of-the-art highway. The route was supposed to reduce travel time while offering safety and convenience, yet many scorned the two-lane toll road as dangerous and unbecoming a modern turnpike. Others critiqued its short length between Charleston and Princeton as a “turnpike to nowhere” (Thruelsen 1955). Shortly after the turnpike opened, the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association revived to seek improvements to US Route 21. They claimed that the turnpike increased traffic along the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway. The group continued its road-boosting efforts into the Interstate Era, and participated in debates over the routing Interstate 77 through southern West Virginia and southwest Virginia. Routing I-77 south of Princeton and North of Charleston was highly contested but proved easier than routing it along the turnpike corridor. State and federal laws limited the funding of upgrades to turnpikes and stirred heated debates on how to legally fund the turnpike’s upgrading to Interstate standards. North-south road development in the Virginias was influenced greatly by the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway. Exploring the creation and debate of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway contributes greatly to mobilities research and scholarship on the Virginia by uncovering multiple intersecting geographical imaginations of road space.

Suggestions for a Critical Humanist Approach to Exploring Road Development

At the heart of this dissertation lies a dilemma: How can we examine the development of road space in a manner that represents its politics over a long period and

stresses the tensions and contradictions of its contending geographical imaginations? A critical humanist approach considers “how signs, symbols, gestures ... and local knowledges convey cultural meanings and create places” (Adams, Hoelsher, and Till 2001, xvi). Critical humanist approaches vary widely in scale and empirical concern and borrow theory from “cultural materialism, feminism ... poststructuralism ... postmodernism and postcolonial theory” (Adams, Hoelsher, and Till 2001, xvi). They also explore “the tensions and contradictions of place” (Adams, Hoelsher, and Till 2001, xix), a quality I have used to consider the unevenness and contestation of road space. It is impossible to understand a place or road space that one has not experienced directly. We cannot simply read our way into understanding, but it is possible to present a texture of place (Adams, Hoelsher, and Till 2001). Critical humanist accounts, therefore, should never be considered final, but rather open-ended discussions. Critical scholarship, poststructural strains in particular, contends that it is impossible to fully understand any place because there are always multiple points of view and numerous processes of place-making that occur simultaneously.

Demands for better roads are a recurring theme in conversations and news reports in southern West Virginia. The roads discussed in this dissertation have changed considerably since the nearly 50-year period examined, but my familiarity with the rhythms of driving and riding southern West Virginia roads has made my research more empathetic toward the hopes and fears of road development in the Virginias. Familiarity with the region’s roads and challenging topography aided my attempts to empathize with historic contests of road development. Although my research has focused on the development of road space in early to late 20th century West Virginia and southwestern

Virginia, I believe a critical humanist approach will prove useful to others who wish to explore geographical imaginations and their intertwining with materiality, meaning and practice.

My research illustrates that a critical humanist approach is useful for practice and exploring the tensions and contradictions of road development. I have used the words “explore” and “exploring” frequently in this dissertation because I believe they bridge the humanist ambition of understanding experience and new cultural geography’s goal of exposing contestation. Road boosters and other enthusiasts sought to place the Virginias within a modern region and nation, but the tensions and contradictions of materiality, meaning and practice were frequently sources of conflict. Likewise, demands for road improvement are indelibly tied to contradictions of geographical imagination and the unevenness of its materiality, meaning and practice. Practice is inevitably imbued with meaning. In West Virginia the development of road space was frequently tied to tensions and contradictions of progress and backwardness; exploring them promotes understanding the past in way that that sheds on light on the present.

Geographical Imagination and a Critical Humanist Approach to Road Space

What does a critical humanist approach to road space entail, and how can we explore the tensions between desires for modernity and its contested politics over a long course of time? Materializing geographical imagination is a crucial element of a critical humanist approach (Cresswell 2006, 2011). Materializing geographical imagination also adds critical weight to what might otherwise become an idealistic prolix of how roads came to be. Geographical imagination is most commonly associated with meaning yet it

is also interwoven through society's materiality and practice. Daniels (2011, 185) encouraged us to look more deeply into the intertwining of materiality, meaning and practice when he asked "If landscapes on the ground are not merely projections of our views, but rather mediums shaping the way we look at the world, how do they materialise the geographical imagination, in their very fabric and the way we live in, work on and move through them?" Daniels's question exemplifies a critical humanist approach; it acknowledges the tensions between the meanings we imbue upon our surroundings and how its materialities are shaped through practice.

Invoking and Evoking Geographical Imagination

One interconnection between geographical imagination and the materiality, meaning and practice of road space concerns invoking and evoking. Collectively, invoking and evoking bridge the critical concerns for social construction and the humanist concerns for experience of space, place and landscape. Geographical imaginations are invoked when they are called upon in strategies of political discourse and contestation (Bialasiewicz et al. 2007). Invocations inscribe geographical imagination by shaping materiality, meaning and practice to fit the values of those with power. Invocations are always contested. For example, proponents of the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway cited its orderliness and savings on travel time, while many of its critics invoked local connectivity. In a similar manner, critics of the West Virginia Turnpike invoked geographical imaginations of fear and encouraged officials to widen the toll road. Turnpike investors invoked prohibitive costs, rights to private property, and the improvements over the previous situation in its case for a two-lane turnpike.

Safety and connectivity are predominant discourses in demands for road space, but it is foolish to believe that they are merely inscribed simply from the top down. Evocation recognizes such emotional engagements with road space. Fear, exhilaration and other emotions are aroused through the practice of driving as motorists interact and encounter the materialities of road space. Drivers and passengers evoke geographical imaginations when they feel, see, smell and hear roadways. Narrow and curvy roads can evoke desirable sensations such as thrills, or less pleasant sensations such as nausea. If road spaces are made through the intertwining of materiality, meaning and practice, then evocation is a means that practice acquires meaning. Evocation bonds the humanist concern of experience amidst modernization with recent research into the complexity of practice (Nash 2000b; Merriman et al. 2008). Evocations of road space sense materialities and practices, and imbue them with meaning as “a felt ‘doing’ and knowledge in practice” (Crouch 2001, 68). My concept of evocation draws on Edensor’s concept “mobile sense of place” (2010) whereby travelers developed familiarity to frequently traversed roads. However, I use the concept of evocation in a more collective way than Edensor’s mobile sense of place. Evocations are fitting for critical humanist investigations because they often contradict invocations of those in power. Considering invocation and evocation conjointly permits a critical humanist approach to explore how geographical imaginations of road space are materialized and contested.

Embodied Dispositions

A second interconnection between geographical imagination and the materiality, meaning and practice of road space concerns embodied dispositions, geographically and historically specific attitudes that prefer certain types of mobile practice (Sheller 2004, 2007). Embodied dispositions exemplify the tensions and contradictions between geographical imaginations and road space. Roads are practiced through material interactions of body, machine and road surface, yet they are not simply material. They are imagined and evaluated through the practice of driving and riding them. As objects entangled in the production of mobility, roads are implicated in “mediated imaginations” (Edensor 2004, 117). They are judged by how well they meet the expectations of a given time and place, including what constitutes a suitable road. How comfortable or arduous interactions are between the body and highway are significant factors in evaluating the suitability of road space.

Embodied dispositions inspire emotions as the body interacts through a hybrid of vehicle, road surface and surrounding topographies (Sheller 2004, 2007; Edensor 2004). Roads are not merely points on a map, but are driven and ridden under a variety of physical and social conditions, including seasonal changes, topographies, traffic laws and relations with other drivers. For example, as a youth I spent many frightened hours as a passenger on narrow winding mountain roads anticipating the moments our car would careen over cliff-like embankments. Oncoming coal trucks were especially frightening. Snow and ice made traversing mountain roads all the more tense. As an adult, the mountain roads evoked less fear, but it did not subside entirely. US Route 52 still seems too narrow for its speed. The emotions I experienced resulted, in part, from the embodied

disposition of riding and driving narrow roads through the coalfields of southern West Virginia. Exploring the region's road development reveals that many have had similar experiences.

Embodied dispositions influence geographical imaginations, and are an embodied form of geographical imagination. Cotton Hill and the West Virginia Turnpike, for example, were each praised for their scenic landscapes, but criticized as too narrow and dangerous to be modern through routes. When the Consolidated Bus Lines advertised its safety record through the coalfields, it invoked an embodied disposition of comfort and security. Decades later, critics of the West Virginia Turnpike frequently cited the dangers of that curvy, two-lane highway. When Governor Gore's inspection tour of the roads in southern West Virginia made members of his traveling party sick, the *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* (Sept. 15, 1926) invoked nausea and inconvenience to make a case for the embodied disposition of straighter and more reliable roads. The road evoked nausea in the party, but the newspaper invoked that experience in its political efforts to improve the region's roads. Invoking geographical imaginations of fear and danger is a time-honored tradition in the politics of road space in West Virginia's southern coalfields. Embodied dispositions contribute to this politics of road development when drivers and riders traverse the routes. Centrifugal and centripetal forces nudge motorists and vehicles through curves. Hands grip the steering wheel and gearshift; feet move the pedals; the entire body feels the vibrations of the road (Bissell 2010). Embodied dispositions, then involve both the evocation and invocation of road space. Road space is experienced and inscribed. Imagination and the body intertwine through demands and contestations of road development.

Embodied Dispositions, Kinaesthetic Investments and the Unevenness of Road Space

Embodied dispositions involve the intertwining of materiality and meaning, but it is also important to consider ties between materiality and practice. Road development is frequently prompted by desires to standardize driving practices. Roads are inherently uneven. Efforts to build and improve the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway were often framed in terms of gaining equality with the rest of the country. It is easy to envision large-scale flows of goods, people, and ideas and overlook the friction of movement at smaller scales such as a narrow and curvy section of road. Kinaesthetic investments and material affordances (Sheller 2004, 2007) acknowledge that materialities and practice of road space are uneven. Kinaesthetic investments include modes of mobility such as walking, bus riding, or driving an automobile. Material affordances include technologies and topographies that facilitate mobility (Adey 2008).

As with embodied dispositions, kinaesthetic investments and material affordances can involve deeply emotional politics (Sheller 2007, 180). Road debates often invoke the incongruities between material affordances, kinaesthetic investments and popular embodied dispositions. In the early 1920s, for example, Charleston road boosters touted the ease of driving from Huntington to Bluefield via Charleston than across the Tug River Highway, a shorter but more physically demanding route. When Wells Goodykoontz upbraided the deplorable conditions of US Route 52 in the mid-1930s, he invoked a negative sense of place. In his opinion, the road's incongruities with modern road space prompted tourists to avoid West Virginia on their way to other points of interest (*Bluefield Daily Telegraph* Sep 12, 1935). In the 1950s and 1960s, many criticized the

West Virginia Turnpike as a backward and unsafe highway. Exploring embodied dispositions, kinaesthetic investments and material affordances uncover tensions and contradictions in the development of road space than may be lost in the present. If many complain about present day road conditions, it is worthwhile to know that the conditions of past roads were also contested.

Inscribed Rhythms and Road Space

The third interconnection between geographical imagination, and the materiality, meaning and practice of road space concerns the inscribing of rhythms (Edensor 2010). Inscribed rhythms are a means of ordering the interactions between time, movement and repetition of road space. A critical humanist approach to rhythm explores the tensions and contradictions of inscriptions, and contests over progress are often struggles to change or maintain rhythms. Exploring past rhythms enlivens the past by illustrating concerns for ordering road space. After briefly describing inscribed rhythms, I will discuss the illusion of rhythm to illustrate the value of contested rhythm.

Rhythms are typically taken for granted until they falter. Embodied dispositions, kinaesthetic investments and physical affordances play significant roles in the maintenance and changing of rhythm. Exploring inscription reveals powerful discourses of road space. Inscriptions are carved, posted and erected materially to influence meaning and practice. As rhythms of capitalism speed up and extend over time (Edensor 2010), people become accustomed to the speed and feel of certain roads and vehicles. Road development attempts to inscribe certainty in the ability to travel by managing encounters (Amin and Thrift 2002) between motorists and the objects of road space and

other motorists. Bauman (2000, 2006) includes the desire for certainty among the hallmarks of modernity, yet the politics of road development are often steeped in uncertainty. Roads may prove more dangerous than planned or fall short of expectations. Road space is imbued with the materiality and practice of rhythms.

Throughout this dissertation three forms of inscribing rhythm surfaced: routing road space; dressage; and haunting and uncertainty. I elaborate on each below.

Routing Road Space

Inscribed rhythms reflect powerful geographical imaginations that attempt to systematize behavior (Edensor 2010, 11), for as Amin and Thrift contend, “Rhythms are not free to roam where they will” (2002, 26). One key means of inscribing rhythms into road space is through routing. Routes not only connect places, but provide physical affordances (Sheller 2004, 2007) that conduct movement to some places and away from others. Indeed, much of this dissertation has concerned debates over routing. Routing is inherently multi-scalar; roads do not simply connect termini, but also traverse the places and spaces in between. In this dissertation, I made a point of exploring the smaller scales, such as bridges and short stretches of road, that illustrate how road space is lived and contested in the every day. As Amin and Thrift (2002) explain,

If we live in a world of artifice, then this means thinking especially about the little things that escape our attention because they have become so much a part of everyday life, yet are constantly directing us here and there, often without us noticing because we have adjusted our bodies to their imperatives (91).

Roads are practiced and imbued with meaning at numerous scales.

Some routing wars involved road enthusiasts along with states and the federal government. Efforts to route US Highways and Interstates stand as prime examples.

Some, such as the bridge toll bridge near Kanawha Falls, involved a relatively small number of people. Each however, concerned daily life and objects that inscribed rhythms. It is important to consider the importance of small scales. Road space is often taken for granted until it becomes difficult to use. Interstate highways inscribe speediness and ease of travel through limited access and multiple lanes. In southern West Virginia, safe grade crossings were highly valued affordances. One may think little of driving over a bridge that crosses a railroad track, but it is much safer than the alternative of driving across the tracks and more convenient than waiting for trains to pass. This dissertation has stressed that geographical imagination is not merely thought; it is enacted and materialized through the intertwining of bodies, machines and infrastructure. Amin and Thrift (2002) advocate understanding cities as machines. Their “machinic city” is composed of objects that move, circulate, relate and breakdown. The machine metaphor has also proved useful in describing and exploring the materiality, meanings and practices of road development.

Conceptually, the machinic city acknowledges the constancy of change and the upkeep required to maintain orderly systems. Objects are a key to materializing geographical imagination and inscribing of rhythm. For example, bridges inscribe rhythm by circulating traffic and regulating encounters between people and incompatible rhythms (Amin and Thrift 2002). Inscribed rhythms materialize geographical imaginations and practices by ordering space. For example, the Easley Bridge in Bluefield inscribed renewed social and commercial connections with the coalfields while also inscribing a modern place image. As Edensor observed, “It is important to avoid the inference that the quotidian is ... a sphere of entrapment and stasis” (2010, 13). Indeed,

what is now viewed as quotidian was likely presented as modern when new. As machinic objects of road space, routes inscribe rhythm by directing the possible paths that drivers may follow. Routing is often forgotten until something impedes our travel or we must negotiate a new route. It is important to consider the complexities of routing as an inscription of rhythm. Billboards advising motorists to avoid parts of US 21 played a partial role in reviving the Great Lakes-to-Florida Highway Association. McDowell County's bus-taxi war inscribed rhythms by ordering who had legal rights to conduct the business of carrying passengers.

Dressage

A second way that road space inscribes rhythm is through dressage, described by Lefebvre (2004) as training in the proper use of gestures. Dressage makes rhythms seem natural. Many who have driven in other countries experience a sense of anxiety when faced with different understandings of comfortable trailing distances and safe turning speeds (Edensor 2004). How we adjust our bodies, the embodied dispositions and kinaesthetic investments, vary historically and geographically. Rhythms appear orderly when they conform to senses of normativity, for as Lefebvre observed, we notice "the relations between rhythms" when they break down or are hindered by other rhythms (2004, 21). When rhythms fit embodied dispositions they may hardly go noticed. Exploring road development reveals that rhythms frequently change and overlap (Edensor 2008). Indeed, the concept of dressage views the naturalness of some rhythms as an illusion. Contestations of road space frequently involve disillusionment over the practicality, safety, or backwardness of rhythms. Rhythms change frequently with

economic and technological developments (Edensor 2010). As the arguments over the West Virginia Turnpike revealed, rhythms can be disputed throughout all phases of a project from its inception, daily use, and improvement. For example, disagreements arise over the kinaesthetic investments required to navigate particular roads. Consequently, embodiment and materiality affect geographical imaginations and inscriptions of rhythms.

Dressage also concerns connections between materiality and meaning, and between materiality and practice. Dressage inscribes rhythm materially through objects such as signs and signals that direct motorists' movements. Amin and Thrift labeled such materialities "rules incarnated" (2002, 91). They materialize geographical imagination and direct mobile practice. In a similar manner, dressage can be thought of as rules embodied. In the development of road space one of the primary goals of dressage is to control encounters. Roads connect places, but they also connect bodies to places and objects used to those places. The practice of driving also connects motorists to other drivers often with horrific consequences. Objects are fundamental features in the creation of passion and dressage manages interactions with those objects. Objects influence emotions by inducing meanings and practices. Dressage is necessary, for as Edensor and Holloway illustrate, "In any space, the rhythms of a multitude of social actors intersect" (2008, 485). Disputes over the placement of I-77 signs along the West Virginia Turnpike prior to its official designation as an interstate highway involved concerns over dressage and the dangers of misunderstanding the route's material affordances. The signage debate also involved unclear messages about what gestures were permitted or expected along the highway. Critics claimed that the signs indicated a

particular style of driving that was expected of interstate highways. In other words, its inscribed rhythm was incongruent with the safe gestures of driving. As Lefebvre proclaimed, “Gestural systems embody ideology and bind it to practice” (1991, 215). Signs and signals direct motorists and influence emotion. Stop signs and traffic signals for example make highways and streets safer, but can instigate strong feelings. In recent years, many have decried the use of cameras on traffic lights as a violation of privacy. Supporters claim that the cameras deter traffic violations and make roads safer. Proponents of closed-circuit cameras in the Memorial Tunnel argued similarly that the tunnel was safer, and that dressage could be assessed and controlled. Opponents denounced the cameras as intrusive. Roads are widened, curves are straightened and signs are updated, but emotions tie the past to the present. The dressage of road space changes, but emotional political struggles continue. Praising modernity’s conveniences and cursing its invasiveness are not new.

Inscription as Haunting and Uncertainty

Humanistic geography frequently explores the effects of modernization to place and landscape (Relph 1976; Lefebvre 1991; Augé 1995; Adams, Hoelscher, and Till 2001). I suggest that a critical humanist approach to road development is not a seamless change, but an intermingling of past and present materialities, meanings and practices. As road space is developed and modernized rhythms do not swiftly change; traces of past rhythms remain (Hetherington 2004 Edensor 2003; Lefebvre 1991). Through the processes of developing new roads and rerouting old roads rhythms become inscribed and re-inscribed with meaning. Uncertainty can also develop when modern upgrades are

insufficient. Once again, the turnpike stands as an example. Many critics viewed the route as obsolete from its beginning while its proponents lauded the route as modern. Road space can cause uncertainty when new and old forms of roads combine, such as when motorists are directed to take detours through cities or along less reliable roads.

Rather than contemplate the uncertainty of dereliction and change, De Certeau's (1984) notion of haunting enlivens the present by connecting it to a past that cannot be completely erased. Road space is haunted when physical evidence reveals past rhythms. Many highways are marked with roadside memorials commemorating deaths, but even more mundane forms of haunting occur through the normal wear and tear of road surfaces. Ruts and potholes are traces of prior traffic. When we feel the sudden jolt of a pothole, we encounter the legacy of past motorists. Degraded roads, and the emotions attached to them, are hauntings or footprints. To borrow Amin and Thrift's phrase, degraded roads are "an imprint from the past" (2002, 9). Degraded roads are quite literally imprints, and played a significant role in geographical imaginations of road development in West Virginia and southwest Virginia.

Exploring the Past to Comprehend the Present

Exploring road development in the Virginias through a critical humanist approach reveals that critiquing modernization does not equate with romanticizing the past. Indeed, few would choose unreliable, dangerous and uncomfortable roads. Nor would many argue that the Virginias would be better off today with the highways it possessed in the early 20th century. It is important to consider the politics and experience of road space. Highways are often criticized as monotonous monstrosities (Lefebvre 1991;

Edensor 2003; Moran 2005), but we need not burn our bridges literally or figuratively. There is much to applaud and critique in road development and a critical humanist approach critiques such fanfare by considering contradictions and tensions.

As I have applied it, a critical humanist approach should consider both the “darker” and “brighter” sides of geographical imaginations (Daniels 2011). The darker side of geographical imaginations exposes inequalities and seeks social justice. The brighter side of geographical imaginations presents more positive senses of place and exploring the wonder and complexities of everyday life. The development of road space involves benefits and burdens (Birdsall 2003). Benefits frequently involve the brighter forms of geographical imagination such as striving to improve place and become modern. For each benefit there are also people and places that must pay the burdens by losing the political battles for improvement or through changes in economic systems. This dissertation has explored both benefits and burdens. While either can prove valuable subjects of research, considering both presents a balanced approach.

Interpreting road space through a critical humanist approach uncovers the complex histories of development. This dissertation upholds the importance of exploring changes in road development while proclaiming the need to recognize similarities between the between the past and present. Considering similarities between the past and present reveals that development is not simply a series of technological innovations. Materialities, meanings and practices endure through transitions of development. When we find similarities between the past and present, it opens up possibilities to consider that past developments were not simply unsophisticated foils for today’s high-tech mobilities, but were themselves high-tech endeavors in their own day that involved the stretching of

geographical imaginations. The past and present are connected through materialities, meanings and practices. Each has a politics and it is incumbent upon us to study how they relate to each other at different periods.

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