Learning from Lewisburg

Tour guide for the ‘28th Annual Conference of the Nineteenth Century Studies Association’ meetings at Selinsgrove, Penna
March 9, 2007.

Every landscape carries memory of the past from which it emerged.

Every human landscape projects the aspirations of the inhabitants. Lewisburg is a small town with a strong and explicit – if largely contrived – sense of history.

A walk through Lewisburg helps us see how this place, like many other places, is constructing an autobiography – an "autogeography" – from the resources that history has given it, and a bit more.

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Large color versions of the images can be found at: http://www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/marsh/lewisburg_tour/
Premises:

1. Culture is symbolic ... even the functional parts of it. Symbols communicate to ourselves (“This is a nail & I need a hammer.) or to others.

2. Cultural landscape is the set of cultural elements in the public realm that we encounter as we navigate the world.

3. Cultural landscape, as a symbol system, carries messages about the intentions of the actors on the landscape, some of which we over-hear, some of which are directed at us, some of which are only semi-consciously conveyed. This sub-study is of symbol systems, values, and rhetoric.

4. As a long-lived cultural system, the cultural landscape bears the record of successive stages of economic, physical, social forces. This sub-study is of community evolution,

5. As a spatial system, the cultural landscape retains the record of process, action, change, impact, and adaptation.

Themes:

1. Lewisburg happens to have existed over a remarkable time period that bridged the transition from pre-industrial circumstances that would be familiar to the Romans, all the way to a information-intense, highly inequitable, post-industrial economy, that we acquire from the Santa Clara valley.

2. Small towns in Pennsylvania adapted to rich resources but difficult transport.

3. The river made the town, but the town has never been at-ease with the river.

4. The university located near the town to derive benefits from a controlled relationship; the town is now highly adapted to the indirect benefits it can derive from the university, which now dominate the character and economy of the town.

5. The marks on the landscape reveal the progression of different uses that the people made of (the same) physical world.

6. Symbolic content of the cultural landscape reveals 200 years of evolving, enlarging, and more global worldviews of the residents.
Route of the Lewisburg walking tour – from the university in the south, to the river, to the bridge, through town, and back to the university.

Today we will make it downtown, and maybe a bit further.
I. Campus and town

1 Start on campus, standing on the walk at the east front of Roberts Hall — facing town and river:

   East façade of Roberts Hall

Evolution of the university landscape

The University at Lewisburg — now Bucknell — was started in 1846 as a Baptist college. Roberts Hall, an austerely Baptist version of a Greek Revival building is the second-oldest college building at Bucknell, dedicated in 1850. Originally called Main Building and then “Old Main”, this plain building was designed by Thomas Ustick Walter who also designed the exuberant present dome on the U.S. Capitol. This isolated spot was once the front of the university.

Romanesque pile that is Bucknell Hall

Lewisburg is nestled in the valley of the Susquehanna River between several ridges.

Montour Ridge, seen from the upper campus; an elongate upwarp of rock makes this ridge shaped like a breaching whale.

2 Walk down three short sections of staircase and travel left down the walkway to the bottom the hill:
Pause at the flagpole between the brownstone 1906 gateposts and face down University Ave. You are now standing at the original ceremonial entrance to campus; you are looking along the wide avenue which led to "The Hill" as it was known.

The spatial relationship between the town and the university.

Note that University Ave. cuts diagonally toward campus defying the rectilinear plan of most town streets (as the map of the town can show you), and self-consciously connects the town to the periphery and to the isolated academics who had taken residence on the hill to the south of town 160 years ago.

Nineteenth Century presentation of the University at Lewisburg as an academy perched on a hill at the edge of town.

Today University Avenue is tree-lined and unremarkable, with broken-up sight-lines; note by-passed brownstone gate.

To your left, on the opposite corner, is the President's House. In its day this was an extremely stylish building, built by an early president & sold to the university.

President's house: Gothic Revival gem originally straight out of an Andrew Jackson Downing plan book, ca. 1852, for "A Cottage in the English rural, or Gothic, Style"
III. University Avenue – connecting the parts

Walk down University Avenue:

Note as you pass: Cooley Hall (the 1890's Italianate mansion on the right at the corner of University Ave. and Malcolm St.) and surrounding buildings in which the machines of University Relations (e.g. alumni relations, fund raising) hum away at a safe remove from the academic programs. McClure house, opposite, was recast as a stylish Mansard building some years after it was built.

Bull Run (running under University Avenue) a quaint, but periodically, deadly creek which flows into the Susquehanna River just out of sight to the right. Some of you are familiar with its dangers from the September flood of 1999.

Bull Run, acting calm. Draining agricultural and suburbanizing land, the creek carries a heavy load of eroded soil almost year 'round.

The Civil War monument at the end of University Avenue on the right which commemorates the town's terrible losses, typical of those suffered by small towns all over during the Civil War.

The Civil War monument, built ca. 1902. This was the era of the poorly-justified imperial "Spanish War", when the nation needed to remind itself of the virtue of military sacrifice ... perhaps the situation is familiar today?
Monuments commemorate the commemorators, too; monuments are tales of the virtue of the creators.

**Turn right down Barton St. (the little one-way road) cross over to the Historical Marker on Brown St.:**

If you look to the right (south) you see Mill St. headed toward the river and, tracing it back the way you have just come, you may see that you are on the path of the old mill race for a grist mill, which took its water from a weir on Bull Run.

**Beginnings of Lewisburg.**

The Derr House was originally the home of Ludwig Derr, founder of Lewisburg in 1785. He purchased a large parcel of land on the banks of the Susquehanna where he built a profitable grist mill, surveyed the parcel for settlement using the grid plan with which we are familiar, but died while early plans for the settlement were going forward.

Like many of the towns in central Pennsylvania, Lewisburg was founded by a German. Ludwig Derr laid out the town in 1785 as Derrstown. The "Lewis" in Lewisburg is an anglicization of Ludwig; the idiosyncratic street names — St. Catherine, St. Mary, St. George—are misreadings of the signs for streets named after his children — "St." was "Strasse" for Strasse Katrina, Strasse Maria, Strasse Georg.

*The original Derr house stands somewhere within this structure*

*Mill Street is laid on the head race (incoming flow of water) for Derr's mill*
5 Walk up Brown St.:

The typical college town combination of student, faculty, and other local resident housing. Brown & St. George mark the transition of the street pattern from the casual town-to-town course of the river road, to the compulsively rectilinear grid pattern of a typical Pennsylvania German town ... the town is built to a Platonic ideal of town shape, with each block built to a precise size. The bits of triangular land at the edge the two grids are always problematic to town design ... the Civil War monument uses one ort effectively; the next scrap down Brown St. is just a bare field.

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1868 map showing Mill St. head race, and Lewisburg grid pattern connecting ungracefully to non-gridded regional roads.

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The rigid grid of the town would have been familiar to – and even admired by – the Romans. Here is the grid of Roman Colchester, for comparison.

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III. Lewisburg and the river

6 Turn right and walk down St. George:

You are approaching the river, the West Branch of the Susquehanna.  

The river and the town; a continual negotiation.

The street sign at the corner measures flood depths. (The label is wrong, The marks measure gauge height — depth above the bed of the river — not feet above flood depth, which would be 19 feet deeper.) The 50 year flood, defining the "statutory floodplain" that is illegal to build upon, is at about 29 feet depth ... about five feet over your head. The house on the right (south) was built upon an earthen pad to lift it above the floods. The "flood proof" condominium group recently built along lower St. George St. appears to be normal townhouses until you look closely.
The theory: an unoccupied lower-level, only garages and steps ...

... the practice: it's legal, but it's still pretty disconcerting to be half-flooded (here in the January 1996 flood).

Land uses on the floodplain ... modest-priced rental housing (right) and a reclaimed hazardous waste site (left) where the coal gas works used to be.

Note that the "St. George St. boat launch" — the sad stub of pavement that runs halfway down to the mud flats by the river — is the only formal governmental river access in the entire county. Lewisburg has clearly not embraced the full potential of being a river town.

7 Walk back up St. George and turn right up the alley:

Note the arrangement of the typical Lewisburg residential lot with a house fronting on the street (usually not set back to any degree), a long narrow yard, and a garage — formerly at horse stable — on the alley.

Stables in alleys; relict of horse-and-manure days; we can only imagine the tons of hay and oats that were imported, and the tons of manure to be exported.

All blocks in the area of the original town survey were split by an alley running north/south (parallel to the river) except the blocks fronting on Market St. in which the alley runs east/west.

8 Turn left up St. Catherine, turn right on Second St. and walk up to the Union County Courthouse:
Union County courthouse, built about 1845, after Union County broke off from Snyder County ... a small-town revel in the majesty ascribed to Greek Architecture in the 19th Century.

Stand on the sidewalk in front of the Cronrath Funeral Home and admire the neo-Classical east façade of the courthouse in the Ionic order, rendered in wood. The opposite corner is the Italianate Marsh mansion, now broken into oddly shaped but elegant apartments.

9 **Turn right down St. Louis and walk toward the river:**

Look to the left and the right at the alley to see again the typical arrangement of alleys running north/south behind the houses. To the right, the Tasker Bliss House (just down Front St. a half block) – see the Historical Marker for details of another sidelight to Lewisburg history. The world in Tasker Bliss’s day (Civil War) was a good deal smaller & the nation’s fame was a good deal denser on the land than today.

10 **Continue down toward the river ... to the corner of St. Louis and S. Water St.:**

Most major transport routes have been located on the other side of the river — the Atlantic side, closer to Philadelphia, etc. Shortly before the middle of the 19th Century, the Susquehanna Branch of the Pennsylvania Canal was laid about a mile east of here. It is still visible just west of the trailer park by Montandon; at the linear depression that crosses Rt. 45 by the last row of trees. Lewisburg immediately linked up with a "cross-cut canal" running the mile from Montandon along the current path of Rt. 45. In the river are the remnants of the slack water dam just south (right .. downstream) of the Water St. corner, extending all the way across the river and visible only in low water. The dam pooled river water to create a boat basin for canal boats.

**Canal era**

*Historic picture of canal mouth looking toward Lewisburg. This figure was taken from a history of Union County published by the county historical society: Charles M. Snyder, Union County: a celebration of history, 2000*
The 1845 slack water dam, still visible at very low river levels at the foot of St. Louis St.

Canal boats themselves were an early exportable product of the town, and that industry was the antecedent of Pennsylvania House Furniture, Lewisburg’s most noted (& lamented) industry.

IV. Pre-industrial Lewisburg

11 Walk up S. Water St.:

Note the houses at #s 37 & 27 S. Water St. These are two of the earliest houses in Lewisburg (dated to 1786 and 1789 respectively). No. 37 was the first store and school. See the orientation of these houses toward the river. The east/west alley on the left runs parallel to Market St. rather than at a right angle to it, as does the mirroring alley in the first block north of Market. Note the flood gauge on the back of the garage nearest to S. Water St. Recall that was the height of the 1972 flood was 34 feet ... now look at the level of the houses on the river side of the road nearby. Hmmm.

Why we call it Water St ... the 25 foot flood is expected every 15 years.

Knee-deep living-room flood levels documented by strand line preserved on a basement door since 1972.

12 Turn right and walk out on the bridge until you are standing over the river’s edge:

When the railroad was built beside the canal in 1855, a long covered bridge was built for a spur line. By these means the town, well connected to Buffalo Valley behind it, stayed moderately well connected to the rest of the world to the
east and downstream. The derelict iron bridge upstream is the descendent of that too-flammable first bridge.

One thing that can be seen from the bridge by the observant visitor is the extent to which Lewisburg is disconnected from the river. Only five or six houses don't have a road between them and water (even though much of this part of town isn't even on the statutory floodplain), and the borough has only a few scraggly parks on the river (even though it controls significant river-front land). Perhaps this is understandable for historical reasons. Historically the river was filthy — those houses you're looking at dumped their sewage directly into the river as recently as the 1950's. And this part of town was dirty, industrial, unsavory, smelly, or noisy at various times throughout its history.

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Panorama of Susquehanna from the bridge ... slack-water dam is visible in the river 150 yards downstream.

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The river-side lands have supported human lives since the stone age ... here at Slifer House soccer fields, five blocks north.

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13 Walk back off the bridge to the corner of Water St.:

(See the last page for a larger copy of this map.) Historic map of economic situation of Lewisburg in 1884 when woodwork and river access were premier. Note: canal boat works, the way industry and housing are intergrown (the tannery, e.g.), the covered railroad bridge, a log-raft moving downstream, the slack-water dam, the amount of unbuilt-up land, and the small size of university. A much larger version of this map is at 1884 Bird's Eye View

Industrialization and de-industrialization.

Some classic stages of the development of US city structure are visible around us here near the bridge. Soldiers Memorial Park, upstream of the bridge, is a reclaimed abandoned industrial site — see the round twin foundations of water towers right by the bridge which are also visible in bird's-eye, and the low, red former factory building of Pennsylvania House beyond the old railroad grade just past the park. Lewisburg is still a local center for handling wood and grain two hundred years after Derr built a saw mill and a grist mill on Mill St. A furniture factory is historically one of the town's biggest employers (even as jobs are leaking south from here).

Established at the site of a canal boat works, this was the "Chair Factory" for decades, and has become an antique mall in the last few years — it's the pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial story of the town in one building.

preindustrial "city"
Preindustrial Lewisburg: the home was also a store; the one next door was a tavern.

Preindustrial Lewisburg: a small mill every four miles served local farmers for grinding grain, like this mill west of town that is still powered by water.

Industrial Lewisburg: the railroad connected Lewisburg to the cities to the east, to the sources of raw materials to the north and west — and the line through town was the main access to Penn State, in the Nittany Valley (blue arrows).

Industrial Lewisburg: the big Pennsylvania House furniture factory arrayed along the (abandoned) Pennsylvania RR line, west of Rt. 15.

Post-industrial Lewisburg: the recycled Chair Factory shifted from manufacturing to low-margin sales about 12 years ago.
Post-industrial Lewisburg: the second largest employer is the Big House, the Federal Penitentiary ... one of four federal prisons in the county and ten prisons within Union and the adjacent counties.

Post-industrial Lewisburg: recycling the Reading RR freight terminal as Borough Hall; the functional (and once-ugly?) becomes the stylish.

Post-industrial Lewisburg: the university sets the tone for gentrification.

Deindustrialization in action: the former International Paper Factory gets torn down for restaurants and a Walmart; manufacturing jobs are replaced by service jobs on the same spot within just a few years.

Deindustrialization in action: the parent company of Pennsylvania House Furniture announces that the local factories are closing while production is shifted to China.

Post-industrial Milton, Sunbury & Williamsport: the next few towns up and down the river carry the burden of empty storefronts in their downtown — symptomatic of the movement of commerce to the highway strip, and a depressing signal to anyone thinking of investing downtown.

Start down Market St. away from the river:
From its nucleus where Market meets the river, Lewisburg has grown more-or-less continuously toward the west for two centuries now. The progression of architecture from the river along Market St. is the town’s chronology. Growth has averaged about a block per decade for two centuries (with obvious spurts and stops). It took four decades to fill in to Third St., and about 22 blocks west you can see new houses going up today (220 years later).

The compact old brick and stone houses by the river along Water St. were built in the 18th Century by store keepers and millers. The bulky Federal buildings from the early period of commercial growth stretch from Front St. to Second St. The Hotel was built in 1831, two years before the canal arrived. Other fine buildings were homes for grain merchants and the schoolmaster.

V. What houses tell us.

Three broad eras of American architectural ideology are visible before you.

A. The traditional, or folk, house type was a statement of inclusion, a house built the "right" way to complement the houses around it and permit the builder to endorse conformity. Folk housing was stable in time (changing little over centuries) but unstable in space (different here than elsewhere ... even nearby). Otherwise identical folk houses consistently have slightly different trim treatments only 40 miles from here.

B. After 1880, "national" styles were rapidly adopted, then considered passe within a short period for times. Styles —Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, etc. — swept rapidly and sequentially through the entire Northeastern US, such that many 19th Century houses can be dated to the decade by a cursory look at their style. National styles, like popular culture of today, are consistent over space — the same here as in Ohio — but unstable in time, shifting rapidly over the years.

National styles of housing were expressions of the class and wealth superiority of the builder compared to the adjacent houses. National styles were adopted within wealthy towns such as late-19th Century Lewisburg — but are nearly unknown in the country side. National house styles gained importance as industrialization, wealth,
and communication gave both the means and the permission for part of society to seek to demonstrate its perceived superiority.

C. "Modern" housing of the second half of the 20th Century enables house owners to express their own self-image, unconstrained by either a strong drive toward conformity, as in the folk era, nor a clear sense of an evolving national style. Modern houses satisfy the (perceived) domestic needs of the owner and communicate little about the owners taste in any conventional architectural language, within the relatively anonymous discourse of contemporary cities. Wealth, of course, still wishes to speak its own name.

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**Traditional vernacular architecture:** the 4-over-4 (referring to the room count in the standard floor plan) was the standard Pennsylvania house for 250 years — a generally symmetrical 2 or 2 1/2 story building with roof-ridge parallel the road, built of any material. This house type is at root a farm structure, ultimately designed for its capacity to contain a large family of agriculturalists. This building (at Market & Front) had its roof raised.

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Earlier traditional houses were built without rigid plans — see the uneven window and door spacing and the slight asymmetry of the halves of this double. (Water St.)

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Late traditional architecture — by 1870 — is a highly formalized version of traditional styles. Dimensions, spacing, and fancy finish are precise and replicable. (Water St.)

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Hesitant early manifestations of national styles comprise minor add-ons of stylish accoutrements to what is basically a Pennsylvania farm house in lay-out ... does a cute little campanile stuck on the front of this 4-over-4 building really make it Italianate? (University Avenue).
A confident national building, at last — the Mansarded "Victorian" style house on University Avenue is the one of the first to break from the rigid constraints of the farm house roof line and floor plan. (University Avenue)

"Modern" housing ... demonstrating the owners self-image (wealth, leisure), unconstrained by any conventional language of recognizable styles. Near Stein Lane, south of the university golf course.

Some extreme cases ... houses the size of the Middle School. Lewisburg functions as the wealthy suburb to a dozen nearby towns, attracting lawyers and doctors.

The large houses of 19th Century's wealthy families line this main artery leading to the commercial district of town. The wealth and interaction that the canal, and later the railroad, brought induced the relative exuberance of the older buildings around Lewisburg's market blocks, from Second to Fourth Sts. Classical Revival architecture is rare for residences in Pennsylvania, but clubs, banks, churches, and the courthouse are all done in elegant imported styles.

The hotel, build in 1831, as the canal was arriving. This hotel passed through its pathetic "Hotel/Motel" phase in the 1960s and 1970s, when it catered to truck drivers and featured frequent pool cue fights. Recently it's been renovated for the carriage trade, with lots of oak and faux burnished brass.
Architectural exuberance of indeterminate, eclectic style expresses the prestige of some 19th Century merchant or professional

Interspersed with these are a few longtime local stores — a framing gallery, a stationery store, Stamm's Art-Deco stainless-steel appliance store, a bargain priced movie theater, and the in-town grocery. Lost in recent memory are the local butcher, the old time drugstore, the newsstand, and (several generations of bank buy-outs ago) all the local banks.

Stamm's, a downtown appliance store, remnant of the old small-town economy still able to hold out against Sears' economic pressure. It is an enamel-and-stainless-steel remnant of a bold earlier architectural moment, as well.

7. Downtown

At the corner of Market and Second St.:

Note how the curbs and store-fronts take a step back from the street.

The next two blocks of Market St. were the original market area of town — a widening of the main street to permit weekly occupation by local farmers and craftspersons. Typical of a Pennsylvania town, the market block or market square in its different forms brought commerce into the middle of the town. The market section is visible on the ground here, as in many towns, by a shift from parallel-parked cars to diagonally parked cars.
16 **At the corner of Market and Third Sts.:**

Here the two main avenues of Lewisburg intersect. Market and Third Streets are wider than the other streets of town and were designed as the principal east/west and north/south routes through town. For residents of Lewisburg, this is the main intersection of town — although students identify the main intersection of town as the highway intersection at Rt. 15 & Market St, or the traffic light at 7th & Market as the main intersection. Note the Doric architecture (and pronounced *entasis* of the columns) on the Sovereign Bank, the Doric porches on the Post Office, and the Ionic architecture of the Mellon Bank.

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17 **Detour south (left) one block to the intersection of Third and St. Louis Sts.:**

Churches stand on three of four corners. What is the apparent importance of religion in the urban fabric of the Pennsylvania town, compared to the centrality of commerce?
This parking lot preserves the footprint of this important communal entertainment structure which burned early in the 20th Century.
the dramatically ugly, squat structure which now houses the CVS, built to replace a four-story department store structure which burned a few decades ago.

18 Cross Market St. and walk up the north side of Market; stop at the corner of Market and Fourth Sts.:
Note the end to the widened market blocks. The periodic market continues to be healthy in Lewisburg, it’s just not here. Two miles west of here is Farmers’ Market, a weekly Wednesday assembly of local farmers, bakers, flower growers, bulk-food purveyors, flea-market vendors, and related small merchants. Scenic, fresh, and tasty, the merchandise attracts community members for shopping. This is a good place to get a sense of the cultural variety of the region, as Old Order Mennonites operate a number of the stalls

Rural landscape at Lewisburg.
The Wednesday market reminds us that the essential central-Pennsylvania character of the region continues in spite of the island of "gentility" that is downtown Lewisburg. Union County presents a well-isolated example of rural development in Pennsylvania. The county we see is the product of a long history of conflicting demands on the landscape, between farms, non-farm residences, businesses, and recreation. Farmers value prime soil, flat land, water, and contiguity to other farm land. Much of the center of the valley fits this requirement, and is in dairy farms. Within and around that region are clusters of Old Order families. Needing to be together because the difficulty in traveling by buggy or bicycle, these families are arrayed around a church or a school. With more hand labor, they can exploit more diverse areas with smaller farms, especially, hilly land).

Hot sausage sandwich stand at Wednesday market, on Fairground Road.
Fresh produce in season is attractive.

Agriculture is important to the economy of the county, although it directly only employs a couple percent of the population.

On the street:

Note the Ionic architecture of the M&T bank.

Note the orange and blue tiled, Art-Deco “Campus Theatre” where you can still see first runs in a spacious old time theater at small town prices, and walk home at 11 PM feeling reasonably safe. It’s recently under new management and showing more interesting films while retaining — exploiting? — its small town feel.

Façade of Campus Theatre.

VI. The Post-industrial town

The small local population obviously isn’t supporting this density of specialized retail establishments ... Celtic paraphernalia, local wine, prints of the Lewisburg landscape.
Winning in the post-industrial economy.

Lewisburg is now doing quite well by itself. Of all the towns in the region, Lewisburg has been most successful in profiting from historical-ness. Lewisburg had nice buildings to begin with, and Lewisburg is open enough and sleepy enough to have been spared significant downtown destruction in the 1960's. The University was probably the catalyst for the town's current growth. What was most important in the success of this town is that Lewisburg found itself to be the most livable place in an increasingly dismal region, and has benefited more for its relative attractiveness than for any absolute qualities. Because of its shops, its trees, and its college town flavor and functions, Lewisburg attracted the wealthy and mobile people of the region: doctors from Geisinger, managers from Weis grocery chain home offices in Sunbury, shoe factory managers, lawyers, bankers, and salesmen from the whole region. And that appeal is self-perpetuating; the town becomes more attractive as more wealthy people live here.

Obviously the residents of the local area (17,623 people in the 17837 Zipcode, according to the 2000 US Census) cannot support this number of specialized businesses. Specific populations are attracted at specific times to shop here. Regional young adults for Friday/Saturday dinners — see the badly parked BMWs, and the cellphone-shouters on the sidewalk. Bucknell Parents and Alumni at football weekends, parent's weekends, etc. — see the "urban" car behavior at 4-way stops and the well-dressed-except-the-orange-and-blue-parts out-of-towners. And students, and the summer B-and-B folks, and, well, you.

Lewisburg invests heavily in promoting its self-image ... family / Victorian / small-town / stylish, etc. This is one of a number of festivals hosted through the year.

The small-town quality is not invented or imagined, but it lies awkwardly with the commercial use to which it's put ... a use which may be damaging the genuineness of the small-town air.

Quiz: find the three examples of Lewisburg's iconic streetlights on the front of the Hotel. (It is ironic that the emblematic 3-globed Lewisburg street lamps were savaged from the hard-coal town of Mt. Carmel, whose "Victorian" 19th Century experience was much more Charles Dickens than Henry James.)
The reordering of central Pennsylvania’s landscape in the coming decades, as the traditional sources of wealth continue to dry up, will follow the model of Lewisburg. The advantages of towns are now aesthetic or perceptual advantages, and the benefits of those advantages are relative to nearby towns, not relative to the entire national manufacturing apparatus. It is style, not resources, that will select the growth poles for the 21st Century.

**Gentrification in Lewisburg**

Handsome houses are relatively cheap in Lewisburg, and people moving to town for whatever reason — professors, doctors and other professionals working in the surrounding area, retired and semi-retired city people — have been buying and renovating many of the nicer houses. The first blocks of South Front, South Second, and South Fourth Streets are probably the best examples. The effect on Lewisburg is to preserve and improve fine old buildings, and to provide employment for local renovators — but also to push up real estate prices and to change the ways houses are used.

This process is called "gentrification" in cities, as the new gentry move in and bid housing prices out of reach of the traditional residents. There is little evidence that there is much disruption of this sort in the stable housing market of Lewisburg. One person who bought a house on S. Water St. was told by the local banker that that was a nice neighborhood except for all of the professors.

**Elegantly refinished house of S. Front St.** This was always a nice neighborhood, well above the floodplain, & professional people moving to the area have helped to preserve the quality of the built environment. The owner of this house apparently had those shutters custom made, presumably at a cost that would boggle the minds of most homeowners in the area. Non-traditional colors (i.e., not white, gray, and light blue) indicate non-central-Pennsylvania architectural tastes.

**Relative new-comers have significantly different habits about use of space than do longer-term residents.** Walls, for example, (like this newly-enlarged job on S. Front St.) say 'privacy' and 'security' to someone from the city; they may say 'secretive' and 'unneighborly' to a small town resident.
Suburbanization of the small town. The modern SUV is too large for the traditionally sized garage.

Professional lawn guys are a good marker for gentrification; someone has more yard than time, and enough money to solve that problem.

VIII. Lower town

At the corner of Market and 5th Sts is a magnificent example of late 19th C commercial architecture – the façade of this building is cast iron.

19 Walk to the railroad tracks, turn right and walk down the tracks to Roller Mill (the large red building on the left that fronts on St. Mary St.):

This area represents the second major phase of industrial development at Lewisburg, the railroad-based industrial center (as opposed to the early mills and factory by the river which represent the first phase of economic development – a river-based industrial center). You will find the third, road-based industrial centers along Rt. 192 exemplified by the huge PlayWorld headquarters building, or — until recently — JPM Industries and the International Paper factory along Rt. 15.

Note:

on the left, the warehouse structures ranging along the tracks toward Rt. 15. the large mill at the junction of the two rail lines – one line runs north/south along the river; the other runs east/west crossing the river, running along the line of present St. John and then west to Mifflinburg and beyond.

the two sidings curving to join the N-S line; one is represented by a sweep of abandoned multiple concrete piers, standing like dominos, in the low area to the south of the mill. Bechtels, the Lewisburg dairy, had its plant, its warehouse, its store, and its giant Holstein cow a bit farther up the tracks, nearer Rt. 15.

20 Walk back and turn right on Market St.; stop just past the little storefront on the corner:

Note Hufnagle Park, the large open area across the street. This once was a block of structures similar to the other
side of the street, but the structures here by the creek were razed after being damaged in the 1972 flood, and a park was established. It was named in honor of the former Lewisburg chief of police who died here trying to rescue someone from rising water in 1972.

A park remains where an urban block was damaged after the 1972 "Agnes" flood. Bull Run is prone to flooding on its own, and river water sweeps entirely around the middle of town during really big floods.

In the middle distance – at St. Louis and Fifth Sts. – is the Borough Office building in the old Reading freight terminal. Generations of Bucknell students arrived in Lewisburg at the passenger terminal, replaced by the newer buildings nearer Market St.

The bandstand in the park, site of numerous small town communal events – the Christmas tree lighting, the 4th of July band concert, music in the park on summer evenings, peace rallies, etc. It is also popular with local skateboarders who have bashed off every fragile corner of the structure.

21 **Walk on to the bridge over Bull Run:**

Note the rip-rapping of Bull Run to stabilize the stream bank against flood erosion.

View from this bridge in September 1999 ... local folks have reason to fear this stream. Most of the housing visible here is student rentals.

The small covered footbridge to the right was constructed by a Bucknell civil engineering class.

On this part of Market St. you can note the signs – student spoor – that you are nearing the college. To your left is Sixth St., the student ghetto.

*A fieldguide to the student district.*
Student-oriented business: beer, hair, pizza.

Rentals advertised two years in advance

Small buildings, lots of students, relatively steep rent.

Student housing lets itself be known.

Student expression of self-image: leisure, sport, music, big cars, causal parking.
Rental patterns in the Lewisburg area (map shows % of housing units that are available for rent; blue is high & yellow low). You can pick out the location of the floodplain — and therefore housing that long-term residents avoid — in the small blue zones in the middle, near Bucknell.

IX. Out to the highway

Walk three blocks further to the intersection of Market St. (PA 45) and Derr Drive (US 15):

US 15 has bypassed the downtown and pulled business westward. This is probably the third time business has been pulled away from the river-side heart of town. First, Third St, connected south and north to River Road and drew development west in 1840, Second, the railroad drew commerce to Fifth St. in the 1880s. And then in the 1950s development focused on the new highway frontage. Now a fourth bypass, an interstate-quality link up the valley, is under construction on the far side of the river. Time will tell how much business will be lost to Montandon.

The river/river road corridor at Lewisburg has been by-passed three times so far (see light-to-dark arrow colors), and another bypassing is being planned even now, an interstate-grade highway across the river.

This is the high traffic intersection in town. Accessibility to potential customers dictates the success of highway businesses — but the area this corner doesn’t seem to be very accessible ... businesses come and go here. Further north, the highway landscape is in the very familiar style — Walmart, car lots, Day's Inn.

Classic strip commerce located north along Rt. 15.
At the far northern edge of Lewisburg, Country Cupboard is a "Disneyland" restaurant (according to the Philadelphia Inquirer) catering to old folks from all over the Northeast.

Note how Rt. 45 changes orientation after it crosses Rt. 15 heading west into the Linn town area. The town map shows that this spot is the edge of Derr's original grid, and this disjunction affects the planning of the grid as settlement extended toward the west. West and south of this spot — beyond the reach of a walking tour — is active suburban development. East Buffalo Township, which begins in the middle of US 15, is by-far the wealthiest municipality for fifty miles in every direction.

To the south-west of town, suburban architecture mimics the scale & grace of a 1940's public elementary school

Consumption of farmland into low-density / high income housing continues at a vigorous pace.

X. The past and the future

23 Walk back to 8th St., turn right and walk to the cemetery:
The large town cemetery which, like most town cemeteries of either the 1820s AD or 600s BC, was built at the far periphery, just outside of the town. Most ancient cemeteries that were engulfed like this vanished under squatter housing.

24 Walk back through the cemetery on the small road which continues the line of 8th St.:
Read some of the tomb stones — the town was founded in 1785, so some of these folks were first generation residents. The general pattern in the cemetery is, not surprisingly, that the oldest stones are nearest town, with late 19th C. stone and monuments dominant at the hilltop, and 20th C. stones spread out toward the highway.
Reading a cemetery as a cultural landscape

While respecting the fact that every stone represents some person's great sadness, a observer can see an interesting parallel between the styles of the stones, and the style of the houses that were being built at those some periods.

Folk and traditional styles dominate in the lower sections of the cemetery closest to town. Hand-cut local slate finished in traditional German style or venerable English spiritual symbols reflect the conformist and egalitarian influences upon early settlers.

"National" styles predominate in the middle reaches of the plot that was occupied in the years following the Civil War. These monuments clearly reflect the families’ efforts to demonstrate personal power and prestige. Mr. Himmelreich chose the same stocky Greek Revival style for his stone (left) as for the Presbyterian church building on Market St. that bears his name (right).

In the 20th Century style, visible in the furthest corner of the cemetery, the monuments tell individual stories outside of the public symbolic language that constrained earlier generations.

Return to the bottom of campus

Note additional evidence of the re-orientation of Bucknell away from the river and toward the highway, as we foretold at Roberts:

The functional "front" of campus, formerly the elegant brick face of Roberts Hall, is now rows of cars. Automobile culture has grown to dominate and despoil campus, just as it overwhelmed most small towns in America.
A closer look shows how Bucknell is moving away from Lewisburg and toward its own vision of a place in the larger world ... even as the town becomes increasingly dependent of the university for its definition.

Bucknell has turned its back on the town rather dramatically with the stark, unfinished hind end (left) of the otherwise elegant (and still Greek revival in finish) new athletics building (right).

Bucknell costs as much per year to attend as the total income of 43% of the families in the surrounding counties. Attendance at Bucknell, once the modest training for future Baptist ministers, is now a prestige good like a Lexus, a good that is substantially unconnected to the local cultural and economic realities. Justifying this cost requires continual investment by the university in amenities and infrastructure: the old academic upper campus is juxtaposed against expensive new leisure center of the lower campus.

Bucknell now 'markets' — with explicit in the use of that word — itself to a national and international pool of potential students. Lewisburg is safe and scenic, which parents like, but the perceived liabilities of geographic isolation and a lack of nightlife for the students is seen as significant public relations problem for the university.

**Summary: the inversion of the university-town relationship.**

We started the tour by examining how the new little university attached itself to and adapted to the local town in the mid-Nineteenth Century. In the intervening century-and-a-half the influence of the university, nationally known and extremely well funded, has overwhelmed the small town, which is thoroughly de-industrialized and now commercially aberrant compared to the rest of the towns in the central Susquehanna valley. This has inverted the relationship between the two. This relationship that started in 1846 with the naming of "The University at Lewisburg" has shifted over the years; Lewisburg finding its success today as "The Town at Bucknell".
A piece of the familiar 1884 ‘bird’s-eye–view’ map of Lewisburg