Comment

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THE effect of foreign trade on urban growth outlined by Professor Bjork is nowhere seen in more dramatic fashion than in the case of Baltimore. Baltimore was the most phenomenal success story of the war years—a boom town bursting with new inhabitants from America and abroad, with new wealth and new buildings, with exuberance and drive. On the basis of the wartime provision and reexport trade Baltimore shot into the ranks of the major eastern seaports, and when this trade collapsed Baltimore, too, went into a decline.[1] The degree of this decline was great, particularly when Baltimore is compared with New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, but it should not be exaggerated. Unlike these other cities Baltimore was new; founded in 1729, it was still a relatively small port at the beginning of the Revolution. Its trade began a spectacular rise in 1785, and when the wartime boom ended in 1807, Baltimore was left far behind New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, but still ahead of its own position some twenty years earlier.

The reasons for the unprecedented growth of Baltimore after 1790 are well known and need little elaboration here. Geographically, Baltimore possessed a good harbor and, as the most southerly of the major ports, was closest to the West Indies. Most importantly, however, Baltimore was in a position to serve as the major outlet for the goods of the Susquehanna River region whose farmers found it easier to float their produce down to Havre de Grace and thence to Baltimore than to carry it overland to Philadelphia. Good water and land routes were available from Baltimore to Philadelphia and to Virginia. Baltimore, moreover, was situated on the fall line and was therefore provided with the power necessary for mills. In the 1770's migration from Pennsylva-

[1] Statistics in this paper are based on figures found in Records of the Bureau of Customs: Collector of Customs at Baltimore, National Archives.