RACE, RIVER, AND THE RAILROAD:
BLACK HUNTINGTON, WEST VIRGINIA, 1871-1929

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

Significant numbers of studies have elevated the African American experience in Central Appalachia, the Ohio River Valley, and the rural-industrial circumstance of the black coal miner in southern West Virginia. Yet, stories unearthing black migrant life in urban-industrial settings in this region have been largely neglected. Examining the experiences of black migrants and residents in the embryonic urban-industrial environment of Huntington, West Virginia, during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, my dissertation contributes to recent literature refuting the myth of black invisibility in Central Appalachia. Founded in 1871 as a trans-shipment point for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, Huntington’s burgeoning economy and comparatively tolerant racial climate attracted increasing numbers of black migrants drawn to the socio-cultural and economic opportunities for African Americans not found further south. Yet, by the early twentieth-century black aspirations became increasingly constrained as white Huntingtonians, emblematic of deep southern practices, embraced and implemented the tenets of Jim Crowism. My study compliments works within the new urban history paradigm elevating the purposeful nature of black agency in the migratory process, the development of a black working-class, community development, and black response to Jim Crowism. By focusing explicitly on the
multi-layered transition of southern rural and semi-rural black migrants to life in the urban-industrial enclave of Huntington, West Virginia, between 1871 and 1929, this study adds to our knowledge of southern black migration and the migrant experience, the nature and parameters of community, and the extent and character of black response to Jim Crowism.

Strategically located adjacent to the Ohio River in the Tri-state region of southwestern West Virginia, southeastern Ohio, and eastern Kentucky, and founded as a transshipment station by financier Collis P. Huntington for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in 1871, Huntington grew from a non-descript village to the state’s most populated city by 1930. Huntington’s black population grew in concert, so much so that by 1930, the city’s black population comprised the second largest in the state, behind Charleston, the state capital. Black migrants, drawn by the promise of jobs linked to the C & O’s construction through the primeval New River Valley, the completion a decade later of the Norfolk and Western Railroad line southwest of the C & O, and Huntington’s attendant rise as a commercial, manufacturing, and industrial center, increasingly settled within its confines throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Here, they navigated the socioeconomic and political dynamics of race, space, class, gender, and region.

Examination of the black experience in Huntington provides an alternative to the southern-rural or northern-urban understanding of black life. Unlike the massive inter-regional migration that transformed the urban north during the Jim Crow era and the inter-war years, Huntington’s urban-industrial growth, like that
in the rural-industrial southern West Virginia coalfields, resulted from the intra-regional migration of southern blacks. Though commonalities linked the two experiences, the urbanization process posed different challenges, burdens, and opportunities to the black migrant. Unlike the autonomy black coal miners’ experienced in the mines, direct and intensive supervision marked the urban industrial workplace. This study compliments recent literature de-emphasizing the ghettoization paradigm. While socioeconomic forces and racism constrained black ability to live where they wanted, no ghetto existed in Huntington for the length of this study. Part of this development can be traced to growing black residential concentration within the city and the multi-class (and in some places) interracial character of predominately black neighborhoods. Unlike studies asserting proletarianization as a conceptual model to encapsulate the black working class experience, race, not class served as the primary foundational and operative of the Afro-Huntingtonian experience. However, this conclusion does not mitigate the development of class fissures within black Huntington. The rise of a professional class during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century marked an important milestone in the maturity of black Huntington, one that challenged the status quo of white Huntingtonians and complicated black aspirations. A study of Huntington’s black population provides insight into the adaptive techniques and strategies—the strength of kin and social networks, gainful employment, institutional development, property acquisition, and legal challenges—used to confront the manifestations of segregation in an evolving urban-industrial southern environment.
To my family and friends for their unwavering support,

and to Mom who I miss everyday
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INTRODUCTION

In choosing to focus this study on Huntington, West Virginia, I follow a long tradition of African American scholars who link their academic calling to the community and culture of their upbringing. Driving this study is the fact that I am a third-generation black Huntingtonian whose formative education was shaped by my history in the city and its black circumstance. Thus, this is a personal and scholarly mission to chronicle and to better understand the seminal period of a black past heretofore available in bits and pieces, in front-porch conversations and street-corner rhetoric, photo albums and barber shops, school and church anniversary programs, biographies and local histories, dining room recollections and newspaper articles, court records and census data, manuscript collections and slave testimonies, but not previously rendered in a comprehensive scholarly examination. This is a study of black Huntington during the city’s formative years of 1871-1929.

As a southern, non-Jim Crow state, West Virginia offered opportunities and challenges. During a time of political and economic retrenchment that relegated southern black people to second-class citizenship and impoverished conditions throughout the South during the Jim Crow era, West Virginia’s African Americans were able to advance their rights and interests. Linked to the state’s
rise as a rural- and urban-industrial center, black migrant influx proceeded at
remarkable rate throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century,
complicating the nature of race relations within the state and town. Seeking to
reconfigure their new circumstances for their betterment, increasing numbers of
southern black migrants gained employment with the railroads, mines, and
affiliated industries exploiting the state’s resources. The continuing influx of
black migrants into southern West Virginia and Huntington, the rise in their
prosperity and political clout, and the strengthening of community ties are
addressed with this study. Under the three major themes of migration, urban-
industrialization, and community formation, this study addresses the adjustments
black migrants made in the shift from rural-industrial and rural-agricultural
environs of Central Appalachia to a segregated urban-industrial enclave. This
examination of the metamorphosis of black Huntington compliments existing
literature and reaffirms the power of black agency in challenging the corrosive
effects of institutional and industrial racism, and notions of black inferiority
during the Jim Crow era.\textsuperscript{2}

Examining black Huntington contributes to the growing literature serving as
a corrective to the myth of “black invisibility” within West Virginia and central
Appalachia. With 1985’s anthology \textit{Blacks in Appalachia}, scholars began the
concerted effort to address the lack of scholarship relating to the African
American presence in the state and region.\textsuperscript{3} Subsequent works on black workers
in the southern West Virginia coalfields enlarged our understanding of black
labor, labor strife (and cooperation), proletarianization, racism, and black agency
in the region. Kenneth R. Bailey’s and David A. Corbin revealed the social
tensions and labor strife between immigrants, Anglo- and African Americans
migrants competing for jobs. Both Ronald L. Lewis’ Black Coal Miners in
America (1987) and his essay “From Peasant to Proletarian: The Migration of
Southern Blacks to the Central Appalachian Coalfields,” illuminate the value of
black labor to the region, the purposeful nature of black migrant influx, and the
development of a black working class. Joe W. Trotter’s Coal, Class, and Color:
Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915-1932 (1990) and his essay “The
Formation of Black Community in Southern West Virginia Coalfields,”
demonstrate that black people chose to work in the West Virginia coalfields, that
coalmining provided opportunities to subvert racism and discrimination, and that
West Virginia offered unique socio-political conditions that attracted black
migrants, fostered community formation, and fueled political activism. This
earlier scholarship initiated discussion on the historical contributions of black
people to the region’s antebellum and post-bellum political economies, revealed
the extensiveness of black migration to the region, the distinctiveness of black
socio-cultural formation, the nature and extent of black response to the hardening
of the color line, and broadened our understanding of the linkages and
commonalities between local, regional, and national developments. More recent
scholarship has shifted the emphasis from the coal mining region and
proletarianization to examine slavery, black political activism, women,
community development, and historical memory, in the process providing a richer
and more complex picture of the black experience in the region.
This study also contributes to literature examining the black migration experience. W. E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, Charles S. Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier, and others, forming the first wave of historians investigating aspects of black migration to the North, refuted “outside factors” such as environmental change, ecological damage, sharecropping, and racial animosities, as primary causes of black migration, and instead revealed the primacy of black agency in black relocation. More recent studies on black migration reaffirm the purposeful nature of migration and the historical importance of family/kinship and social networks, while elevating the importance of female-centered networks, institutional development, intra-class alliances, working-class consciousness, festival traditions, and southern folkways as vital components assisting the transitional process to life in Northern urban-industrial cities. In illuminating the exertions and sacrifices of black Huntingtonians for self-determination, this examination elevates black agency as a fundamental component of the new African American urban history.

Black life in Huntington embodied the characteristics and schisms of the African American urban-industrial experience in West Virginia, Central Appalachia, and indeed, the nation. Like industrial workers throughout America, and the world, Huntington’s black laborers faced the challenges of adapting to a wage-labor environment in an increasingly industrialized global economy. Yet, the contours of their acculturation were by no means the same. The fluidity of urban-industrial life, the flexibility of race relations, and the historic communal linkages between African Americans on both sides of the Ohio River, shaped the
responses of black Huntingtonians. This study shows that the nature of this experience evolved as Afro-Huntingtonians employed varied strategies and tactics to adjust and adapt to the dictates and mandates of their new environment. Some proved more effective than others. While proletarianization has been suggested as a theoretical framework for examining the black working class experience in southern West Virginia, evidence indicates it fails as an explanatory conceptual model to encompass the entirety of the black urban-industrial experience in Huntington. In the external (white) world, race, not class, served as the primary foundational and operative aspect of the Afro-Huntingtonian experience. Throughout the period of this study, this dynamic proved both unifying and divisive. While race provided the bulwark against the external forces of racism and segregation, it failed to overcome class interests in the internal (black) world. Absent the force of an inter-class, racially-based community alliance to address the racial and occupational constraints, black Huntington’s response was less successful than it could have been. In effect, while class segmentation offered opportunity for many, including the purchase of real estate, it limited and shaped the nature and scope of black Huntington’s reply to their circumstances.

This examination of Huntington is framed by the town’s size, geographic location, and socio-political and racial-economic conditions that created an urban culture that profoundly impacted black Huntington’s community development. Unlike studies of the black urban experience in the vast northern cities of Chicago, New York, or Detroit, or the larger cities of the Ohio River Valley, such as Cincinnati or Pittsburgh, Huntington’s total population peaked at
approximately 76,000 for the duration of this study. Notably, examination of black Huntington shifts away from the literature utilizing the ghettoization or ghetto formation framework, and its emphasis on the deleterious effects of white-initiated economic and legal measures upon the physical and institutional development of black communities. No ghetto existed in Huntington. However, ghettoization studies provide utility to analyze the variegated nature of community formation, and illuminate the ingenuity and historical antecedents of black response to their new environment.\textsuperscript{11} Like black populations throughout the nation, black Huntingtonians’ ability to live where they wanted was subject to the dictates of geography, economics, and racism. Huntington’s expanding manufacturing and commercial core along the Ohio River, increasing property values, developing racialized enclaves, and the imposition of restrictive covenants coalesced to constrain the fullness of citizenship.

The works on cultural identity by individuals such as Homi Bhabha, James Clifford, and Paul Gilroy have informed this study. Like these three, I believe cultural identity is the result of a contested and negotiated socio-cultural process that leads to \textit{identifications} (as Gilroy explains). Moreover, this is an ongoing process informed by societal and discursive relations of power. For these reasons the “new culture[s]” of the black urban industrial migrant was/were both similar to and different from the new culture[s] of the black rural-industrial and/or rural-agricultural migrant.\textsuperscript{12} In fact, as scholars have shown, and my study reaffirms in its examination of the interrelatedness between black populations on both sides of the Ohio River, and to a lesser extent, between those of the southern West
Virginia mining region, a socio-cultural, economic, and/or political symbiosis frequently existed between discrete migrant populations, each bound by place, race, and era. As southern labor historians have show, black miners, including Booker T. Washington, James Woodson, and his son, Carter G. Woodson, left the coal mines to become urban-industrial workers, carrying with them skills, aptitudes, ideas, insights, and ideologies.

Strategically located adjacent to the Ohio River on West Virginia’s southwestern boundary, and founded as a transshipment station for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in 1871, Huntington grew from a non-descript village to the state’s most populated city by 1930. Huntington’s black population grew in tandem, so much so that by 1930, the city’s black population comprised the second largest in the state, behind Charleston, the state capital. Black migrants, drawn by the promise of jobs linked to the C & O’s construction through the primeval New River Valley, and afterwards by Huntington’s rise as a commercial, manufacturing, and industrial center, increasingly settled within its confines throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Here, they attempted to navigate and negotiate the socioeconomic and political dynamics of race, class, gender, and region, a process that “involved not just the interaction between white capital, labor, and the state, all of which to varying degrees, practiced racial discrimination against blacks, but the dynamic actions of blacks themselves.”

Key to this portrait is the recognition that while race relations in the town reflected the hostilities and rigidity of those in the “Deep South,” it did not
embody them. A host of factors—the fluid state of Huntington’s industrial growth and the importance of black labor to it, job and land availability, racial tolerance and class affinity, and some level of respect for the rule of law—mitigated the development and establishment of an ethos of entrenched and pervasive racial intolerance. Certainly, existing patterns of de jure and de facto discrimination impacted black aspiration, but black agency affected them in turn. In truth, although greatly constrained by racial and class inequality, black workers fueled Huntington’s expansion. White authorities and employers recognized the necessity of black labor to their goals and aspirations, and thus were limited in the character of their actions, a dynamic Afro-Huntingtonians exploited. In time, their quest for greater individual and collective autonomy, material gain, and self-respect led to the construction of churches and schools, the acquisition of land, and for many, improved financial standing, education, and housing. This metamorphosis in black circumstances helped facilitate a transformation in the development of black culture and consciousness, as evidenced by the expansion of black institutions, the rise of a black middle class, and civil and political challenges to the racial and class status quo.

This study of the transformation of black life in Huntington from 1871 to 1929, offers several advantages as a case study of urban-industrial African American life in Central Appalachia, southern West Virginia, and the Ohio River Valley. First, West Virginia is the only state that falls completely within Appalachia, a region that stretches through parts of thirteen states from New York to Alabama. Second, although a dynamic salt-mining industry existed in
antebellum western Virginia, the concerted exploitation of the state’s bountiful natural resources—vast, verdant forests, navigable rivers, diverse mineral wealth, and most importantly, coal—did not occur until after its secession from Virginia and the end of the Civil War. Led by the penetration of the railroad and the concomitant rise and expansion of its bituminous coal industry, West Virginia experienced phenomenal industrial, economic, and population growth during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Between 1890 and 1930, the state increased its share of the country’s bituminous coal production from 7 percent to 18 percent, while production in Pennsylvania, the leading northern Appalachian state, dropped from 33 percent to 23 percent of national output during the same period. Third, the epicenter of this expansion within the state occurred in southern West Virginia, where tens of thousands of native whites, European immigrants, and southern blacks migrated to work and live in the grimy coalmining towns and deplorable tent cities that dotted the region. Fourth, Huntington’s proximity to the coalfields and its strategic location adjacent to the Ohio River near the Tri-state area comprising southwestern West Virginia, southeastern Ohio and eastern Kentucky, provided a transshipment nexus for goods and the transportation of people, east and west, north and south. Consequently, while many black workers settled into the rural environs to forge a life, thousands of others migrated to the nascent urban industrial towns and railroad way stations adjacent to the coalfields, and the historic black enclaves and small inland ports that lined the Ohio River. Here, they sought commonalities
of culture, race, history, and place to establish linkages beyond the workplace. For many, Huntington offered such a refuge and platform.

Examination of the black experience in Huntington provides an alternative to the southern-rural or northern-urban understanding of black life. Huntington’s urban-industrial growth, like that in the rural-industrial southern West Virginia coalfields, resulted from the historic intra-regional migration of southern blacks during the Jim Crow and inter-war eras. The urbanization process posed challenges, burdens, and opportunities to the black migrant that differed from those experienced in the rural-industrial work camps and towns. Unlike the autonomy black coal miners’ experienced in the mines, direct and intensive supervision marked the urban industrial workplace. Further, locked in at the bottom of the occupational ladder, black urban laborers were vulnerable to the fluctuating business upturns and downturns of an industrial-based economy. Thus, Huntington’s black working class not only confronted racism and discrimination, but underemployment, semi-employment, and unemployment as well. A study of Huntington’s black population provides insight into the adaptive techniques and strategies used to confront segregation and its manifestations in an evolving urban-industrial southern environment. Moreover, research into the Afro-Huntington experience by necessity provides opportunities to better examine southern white Appalachians and their place within the dominant national culture at a time they, like blacks, were stereotyped.

African American life in post-bellum West Virginia could best be described as paradoxical. Notably, recent scholarly literature has refuted the mythology
elevating the abolitionist imperative as the primary force behind the state’s separation from Virginia.\textsuperscript{19} In the process, the centrality of race to the political discourse, rhetoric, and ideals compelling and infusing the state’s formation and the abiding racism informing social relations, has been revealed. Unlike the explicit and hardened nature of racism in the Deep South though, state authorities characterized race relations under the rubric of “benevolent segregation.”\textsuperscript{20} The liberality of this ethos and policy was undoubted linked to the fact that the state’s black residential population never reached a number or percentage that threatened the prevailing power structure. Consequently, West Virginia’s black citizens endured fewer incidents of mob violence, or debilitating forms of labor coercion and exploitation, and since they possessed the franchise, fewer affronts to their exercise of political will (especially in the southern West Virginia coal producing counties, where ambitious African Americans made remarkable strides). For example, West Virginia legislators like their northern brethren, rejected Jim Crow schemes to disfranchise African Americans and to segregate them on common carriers. These exceptional developments compelled some black leaders and newspapers to trumpet the “progressiveness” of race relations within the state.\textsuperscript{21} However, blacks within the Mountain State, unlike those in the North, confronted a state-mandated system of racial segregation in state-run schools and social welfare institutions. They also faced greater injustice before the law and a hostile social environment (especially for those in the southern coal producing counties where the contested nature of migrant influx was more pronounced), which
required a heightened level of mindfulness to the dictates of segregationist norms and the possibility of mob violence.

By the early twentieth century, Huntington had emerged as the principal center of black life in the Tri-state region of southwestern West Virginia, southeastern Ohio and eastern Kentucky. From 1900 to 1910 Huntington’s total population nearly tripled, increasing from 11,923 to 31,161, while its black population nearly doubled, increasing from 1,212 to 2,140. This increase coincided with and abetted a generational shift away from the historical primacy of the working-class element within black Huntington. Broadening economic stability, growing residential concentration, the establishment and maturation of black institutions—churches, fraternal organizations, newspapers, and most importantly, Douglass High School, the development of a professional class, increasing entry into public space, and political and civil agitation, illuminated greater affluence, confidence, and assertiveness amongst Afro-Huntingtonians.

Emergent from this metamorphosis is the resiliency and perseverance of the city’s black citizenry, and the recognition that self-help and racial uplift offered the most viable avenues for progress. The legal challenge to the implementation of restrictive covenants within the city initiated by the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and its eventual victory in 1929 in *White vs. White* represents perhaps the best example of these philosophies.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation establishes the pre-Huntington parameters of race, class, and region by examining the African American experience in
antebellum Cabell County from 1809 to 1865, emphasizing the nature of black life and agency in a yeoman-based “society of slaves,” and the complexities of black response to the Civil War and the severing of West Virginia from Virginia. Examination of the black circumstance in Cabell County affords an opportunity to reveal further the complicated intersections of east/west, north/south, and freedom/slavery in Central Appalachia in an era of increasing animosities and tensions over the issue of slavery.

Chapter 2 examines the immediate post-bellum black experience in Cabell County during the transitional years of 1865 to 1871, a period of adjustment and transition for the county’s black residents. Collis P. Huntington’s decision to establish the western transshipment point for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in Huntington compelled the first wave of black migrants, who arrived to start life anew amid the county’s small, dispersed, and poor black residential population.

Chapter 3 studies the “genesis of the black working class” in the region and town via examination of the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad from Richmond, Virginia, through the New River Valley to Huntington. This development compelled the affiliated rise of industrial capitalism within the region from 1870 to the early 1900s. The chapter examines the character of Afro-Huntingtonian response to their new wage-labor environment and Huntington’s racist and “closed” occupational structure.23

Chapter 4 initiates study on the contours of post-bellum black migrant influx into Huntington during the town’s formative years of 1871 to 1900, a period in which southern black migrants, utilizing kin and social networks, increasingly
arrived into the town. Compelled by a variety of overlapping reasons including economic opportunity, resurgent southern white racism, political enfranchisement, and the quest for “community,” this transplantation of black southerners transformed the economic, political, social and cultural dynamics of the region.

Chapter 5 examines the nature of race relations and the responses by the first wave of Afro-Huntingtonians to the town’s racialized environment during its formative years. It emphasizes the nature of black agency to the challenges of segregated life in the nascent urban enclave, the spatial contours of black migrant settlement attendant to the physical construction of the town, and the nature of community formation and the tensions and fissures attendant to the process.

Chapter 6 examines the evolution of institutional development within black Huntington during its formative years. It emphasizes the metamorphosis in socio-cultural and political expression led by the development of black churches, black fraternal societies, and Douglass High School, and the linkages between black institutional development, community formation, the expansion of a black professional class, and black residential settlement patterns.

Chapter 7 analyzes the metamorphosis in the character and efficacy of responses of a second generation of Afro-Huntingtonians to the intensification of segregationist practices--most notably, restrictive covenants, implemented by the city’s white citizenry during the Jim Crow era. The chapter examines a period in which black residential concentration, population growth, class stratification and the philosophies of self-help and racial uplift, offered opportunity and challenges,
complicating the nature, effectiveness, and scope of black agency and community formation.

Utilization of varied quantitative and qualitative source material helps to reveal a rich, unique, and vibrant African American experience in Huntington and situate it within a broader regional and national context. Emergent from this discussion is the fact that although white Huntingtonians embodied and reflected the progressive political and economic forces that compelled West Virginia’s secession from Virginia and produced a distinct post-bellum culture, the state’s white citizens increasingly embraced the tenets and practices of Jim Crowism throughout the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century. Thus, Huntington’s black residents lived largely in a separate world from the city’s whites, interacting “in conformity to custom, law, and ‘place.’” Operating under severe occupational, economic, political and social constraints, black Huntingtonians created a world of their own in which their responses and actions had to be regularly formulated and redefined. Their varied responses to “the persistence of racial antagonisms and the need to combat them” help to illuminate the vitality and complexity of the African American experience.

The conclusion calls for more cross-disciplinary and multi-layered examination of intersections between African American and American racial, labor, social, and economic history. More specifically, it calls for a continuing commitment to unearthing and elevating the lives and voices of African Americans in the smaller, “less-traveled” historic black enclaves and mid-sized cities that have been neglected by scholars, the continuing study of the mutability
of racial identity and affinity and its politicalization during the Jim Crow era, and the continuing examination of the total black working-class experience as a way to reconfigure and advance discussion on the nature and effectiveness of black agency and the permutations of black community.

2 Arguably the most influential proponent of this stance was Rayford W. Logan, who contended that the end of the Reconstruction Era through the Progressive Era marked the “nadir” in African American history. Rayford W. Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-


10 Lewis, “From Peasant to Proletarian,” 77-102, and Trotter, Coal, Class, and Color.


14 Trotter, Coal, Class, and Color, 1.


16 Trotter, Coal, Class, and Color, 2.
“Even today, some of the best coal in the world is found in southeastern West Virginia and southwestern Virginia, a region known for its ‘smokeless’ coal. Historically, the five southern counties of West Virginia—Fayette, McDowell, Mercer, Raleigh, and Wyoming—and a bit of Tazewell County, Virginia, were collectively known as the Smokeless Coalfields, home to the highest quality coal, and deemed, as Charles Kenneth Sullivan states, ‘literally too precious to burn in the ordinary sense.’ By the end of the nineteenth century, at least four geographically interlocking coalfields would be discovered in West Virginia. The Kanawha and New River Field, the Winding Gulf Field, the Williamson-Logan Field, and the Pocahontas Field employed 100,000 miners by the early 1900’s.” See Cicero M. Fain, III, “The Forging of Black Community: Huntington, West Virginia, 1870-1900,” (master’s thesis, The Ohio State University, 2003), 14, and Charles Kenneth Sullivan, Coal Men and Coal Towns: Development of the Smokeless of Southern West Virginia, 1873-1923 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989), 1.


Trotter, Coal, Class, and Color, 9.

Litwack, Trouble in Mind, xvi.

Chapter 1: The African American Experience in Cabell County, VA/WV, 1809-1870.
Fig. 1. Mary Lacy, slave and caretaker for the children of Captain William A. and Thomas Jenkins, Cabell County, VA/WV. Source: Karen N. Cartwright Nance, *The Significance of the Jenkins Plantation*, 5.
The centrality of Virginia to American history and our national consciousness is indisputable. American freedom and American slavery were forged fundamentally in the cauldron of Virginia’s colonial aspirations and political economy. In 1619, the arrival of the first twenty Africans into Jamestown initiated a profound and horrific historical process leading to the development and institutionalization of chattel slavery within British North America. During the 1660s, Virginia’s colonial legislators within the House of Burgesses constructed the first laws delineating Africans as inferior and their legal status as chattel. Over time, the state’s planter class, dependent increasingly upon its slaves, implemented more stringent, more sweeping measures to ensure the vitality and prosperity of its slaveocracy. In 1763, the British defeat of the French in the French and Indian War removed the last political obstacle to the dominion of the labor system within Virginia and the southern colonies. Even the political changes wrought by the American Revolution, the formation of representative government, and the resultant discourse on the incompatibility of slavery and the American ideal, failed to compel sufficient political will to overcome prevailing economic, social and racial imperatives. No constituency benefited more from this failure than Virginia’s Tidewater aristocracy. The failure to abolish slavery ensured that, from its inception Virginia possessed the largest slave population of any state in the nation, a status it would keep until the Civil War.1

Long before the American Revolution, travelers of all types—farmers, frontiersmen, immigrants, and free blacks, were migrating west from the Chesapeake Bay region. During the 1660s, arriving Europeans, including families
and the sons of Tidewater elites, bypassed the Tidewater region to trek to the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Between 1754 and 1772, freedman and blacksmith Edward Tarr, the first free black landowner west of the Blue Ridge Mountains, owned 270 acres within the Shenandoah Valley. The conclusion of the French and Indian War increased European influx into the region, so much so, Tarr was forced eventually to move on by those covetous of his land and resentful of his skin color. The compromise signed between Britain and their native allies known as The Proclamation of 1763 only stemmed the tide of emigration for a short time. Soon, increasing numbers of adventurous and rebellious Virginians pushed pass the rugged Alleghany Mountains into the Virginia transmontane region.

Settlers also traversed the southerly mountains in their push to the Ohio River. Aided by continuing work on Virginia’s major interior waterways and roads, increasing numbers floated canoes, pirogues, and flatboats and journeyed on stagecoaches to western Virginia. Though fewer in number than found in the Chesapeake Bay or the Piedmont, slaves worked the small and large farms dotting the western region. In short order, the region’s agrarian and commercial economies linked it to the world’s markets, a development that made eastern power brokers nervous and more determined to exert their influence and control over the state. The aftermath of the American Revolution only exacerbated matters as Virginia’s varied geography facilitated the rise of four distinct political regions, Tidewater, Piedmont, Valley, and the West, each, in large measure, with four discrete political visions. Questions on the nature, extent, and morality of slavery in a nation founded on democratic principles further confounded the quest
for political unity within the Commonwealth. By the late 1820s, growing sectional divisions, rising western population growth, and competing and complimentary political agendas infused by “enlightened self-interest,” magnified the pressures of sectionalism. By the mid-1800s, western Virginia’s antipathy against slavery and eastern Virginia’s embrace of it grew so pronounced that only the Civil War and the formation of West Virginia abated the intra-state contentiousness.

While scholars have illuminated much about the slave experience in central Appalachia and western Virginia, little is known about it in Cabell County, (West) Virginia. Named for William H. Cabell, the former Virginia governor from 1805-1808, and located on the western boundary of Virginia, the county was formed in 1809 out of Kanawha County and then included all of what is now Lincoln and Wayne counties, a large part of Logan, Boone, and Putnam counties, and a small portion of Wyoming. In total, the county encompassed 1,750 square miles (see Map 1.1).

In subsequent years the county’s political boundaries changed. In 1824, Logan County was formed, followed by Wayne County in 1842, Boone in 1847, followed by Putnam in 1848, and lastly by Lincoln in 1867. That year, five districts encompassing 282 square miles in the southwestern corner of the state comprised Cabell County. In truth, Cabell County was as far removed from Richmond and the Tidewater region of Virginia as any county in the state (see Map 1.2). Drawn by its strategic location adjacent to the Ohio River near the Tri-
Map 1.1 Map of 1815 Cabell County. Source: *1815 Tax List of Cabell County, Virginia*, by Netti Schreiner-Yantis.
state area including southeastern Ohio and eastern Kentucky, slaveholders, 
cognizant of the county’s cheap, arable land, increasingly settled into the county 
throughout the early 1800s. Accompanying them were their slaves.⁵

This chapter examines the African American experience in antebellum 
Cabell County, with greatest emphasis placed upon the decades immediately 
preceding and leading up to the Civil War. Examination of the character of the 
slave and free black circumstance during this era accomplishes four things: first, it 
helps to situate the county within the larger political economy of the region and nation; second, it illuminates the nature of black demographic and residency patterns, household and family structure, interracial relations and black agency; third, it helps to form an analytical foundation from which to study the 
metamorphosis of the black residential and migrant experience in immediate post-
bellum Cabell County, a topic that begins in Chapter Two; and fourth, it 
contributes to the growing scholarly literature examining slavery in Appalachia.⁶

In 1810, 2,963 individuals resided in Cabell County’s expanse, including 
221 slaves and 25 Indians, or, as one local historian avers, “about 1 ½ persons to 
the square mile.”⁷ In the county’s early years, there were only two villages of 
note. Guyandotte, formed in 1810 at the confluence of the Guyandotte and Ohio 
rivers, was one. During its formative years, the town featured a number of 
businesses and a small, but growing port. Barboursville, situated south of 
Guyandotte along the Guyandotte River, was formed in 1813. Surrounded by 
large expanses of fertile land and plentiful timber, farming and manufacturing
Map 1.2 Cabell County, mid-1800s. Source: Carrie Eldridge, Cabell County’s Empire for Freedom, 30.
formed the commercial foundation of the village during its formative years. Increasing settlement into or adjacent to the villages helped to support burgeoning economic growth throughout the early-1800s. Early white migrants settled into villages located in the eastern part of the part of the county first on land adjacent to the James River and Kanawha Turnpike. The majority of these settlers came from eastern and central Virginia with many accompanied by their families. By the 1830s another small enclave developed at Mud Bridge, which would incorporate into Milton in the 1860s.

Entry into the African American experience in Cabell County begins shortly after its formation when, in 1811, Samuel Witcher sued his father Daniel Witcher, Sr., for possession of “negro man Harris, girl Patsy, girl Phebey, boy David, and girl Charlotte.” In June 1813, owner Wm. Dingess arrived accompanied by three Negro slave boys, Steven, Simon, and Abram. By 1815, the county’s 89 slaveholders owned 219 slaves, an average of 2.5 slaves per household. That year, adult carpenter and Barboursville resident and landowner Cuff Caldwell, was the lone (and perhaps first) free African American residing in the county. At least through the mid-1800s, the low population density, geographic isolation, and preponderance of small farms worked by yeoman farmers likely encouraged a greater level of personal relationship between the master and slave than generally found on the large plantations of the Chesapeake Bay region.

The movement of slaves through sale, importation, inheritance, or hire increasingly became common practice within the county. Slaves were frequently
rented out for labor in the county in addition to the labor performed for the master. Naturally, slaves also had no say in their sale, transfer, or purchase. In effect, whatever the nature of personal relationships between the master and slave in the county’s yeoman-based economy, it was not enough to overcome the recognition that the slave was seen as a unit of labor and vehicle of profit. To this point, in 1821, the appraisers of Margaret Douthat’s estate included the following assets: 1 negro boy, Harvey, $415; 1 negro girl, Mary, $150; 1 negro boy, Joe, $300; 1 negro woman, Delph, $250; and 1 negro boy, Benjamin, $125.

Although there were instances of the manumission of slaves, rarely were more than one or two slaves freed at the same time. And, not infrequently, those freed were older slaves. And, for those fortunate to acquire their freedom, the state of Virginia beginning in 1806, required them to leave the state within twelve months or face re-enslavement. This law effectively acted as a deterrent in cases of manumission within the state for the years immediately following its enactment. The first manumission within the county occurred in 1817 when the court recognized the “extraordinary services,” of [Peg] alias Margarett, a woman of color,” and ordered she be “emancipated, liberated, and act free from all kinds of compulsory and involuntary servitude as a slave.” She was also granted “liberty to live and reside within this county.” No doubt her release was related to an act by the Virginia Assembly of 1815-16, which stated that a slave emancipated after 1806 could apply to remain in the state if he/she had demonstrated “extraordinary merit.” Those manumitted were also subject to conditions. On October 21, 1821, the will of Esther Russell provided freedom to
Samuel, “a Negro man” and bequeathed him fifteen acres of land on Four Pole Creek during his life. He was also given “the grey horse and red cow with a white spot in her forehead, this to enable said Samuel to raise his small children until they can become serviceable to mine.” Thus, though freed, Samuel’s children were still bound by the shackles of slavery.

For those who remained in the county, upon issuance of the legal document granting freedom, the former slave was required to carry the document at all times and apply to the county court for annual permission to remain in the county. Eight months after his manumission, in the only recorded incident of denial of freedom within the county, Samuel was forced to choose between his children or his freedom. Shortly after the court’s decision, Samuel departed the county leaving his children behind. In 1823, the state toughened its restrictions against free blacks by mandating that any Negro failing to show cause why they should remain in an area could be jailed or “hired out” for non-payment of debts, for being destitute or for several other reasons.

Despite state mandates, other manumissions followed. In 1824, Leslie, a man of color, was freed by William McComas. Burwell Spurlock freed two slave women. In 1831 he manumitted Jane and in 1836 he freed Lucy. And, in direct contrast to the 1823 decision ordering the emancipated “Negro” Samuel to leave the state in 1823, in 1836, the court approved the petition of Jack and Lewis, two male slaves, to remain in the county.
The quest to remain in the county takes on added significance when we consider the legal mandates instituted by adjacent states restricting or forbidding free black influx. Although the passage of the Northwest Ordinance in 1787 prohibited slavery north of the Ohio River, the state constitutions of Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky contained discriminatory provisos against free blacks throughout the mid-1800s, illuminating the potential precariousness of Cabell County’s residential free black population.23

The most notable case of manumission in the county occurred in 1849 when wealthy Cabell County slaveholder Sampson Sanders manumitted fifty-one slaves, nearly one-fourth of the 218 slaves freed that year in Virginia. Remarkably, Sanders’s will not only provided his slaves $15,000 cash, but encouraged them to take needed materials from his estate. In all, Sanders spent what one authority estimates was more than $45,000 in cash. On their journey to their new home in Cass County, Michigan, Sanders “also selected lawyers to go with the group to protect them in their travels, making sure everyone purchased good property, and ensuring they were fairly treated in all the legal dealings.”24 The party, including seven babies under two years of age and two eighty-year-old grandparents, traveled down the Guyandotte and Ohio rivers on a flotilla of rafts carrying their personal belongings, necessary equipment, essential supplies, and assorted livestock, before reaching Cincinnati. There, they connected to a train to Elkhorn, Indiana, where, they transferred to wagons for the fifteen mile journey to Calvin Township, Cass County. In all, the journey took three full days.25 Upon their arrival into the “comparative wilderness of Cass County,” where a
residential free black population of approximately 340 existed, each of the former slaves was given a tract of 18 acres of land, and a log cabin was constructed for each family. The aggregate acquisition of land approximated 700 connected acres.  

Coincidently, that same year, with $10,000 given to them by their slave master James “Pap” Twyman, the Burlington “37,” led by former foreman Walker Fry, traveled by wagon train from Madison County, Virginia, across the Blue Ridge Mountains to Lawrence County, Ohio. “Their journey was made in fear and dread: fear that something might happen to prevent their reaching the haven of rest, dread that some shrewd lawyer might pick out some flaw in the papers and that they would be remanded back to await the tedious motions of the law’s delay.”

Susan Spencer, whose grandmother gave her a copper kettle used during the voyage, imagined that “they stopped and cooked beans or stopped to boil baby diapers in it.” Comprising four generations, including the youngest member, “Littler Traveler” (later called William “Traveler” Smith), born somewhere along the journey, they settled into Burlington, Ohio, four miles downriver from Guyandotte. There they undertook their first task: the acquisition of surnames.

By the mid-1800s, both Guyandotte and Barboursville were vibrant villages. By the early 1830s, Guyandotte was hosting many river travelers as well as benefiting from the construction of a road which connected it with the James River and Kanawha Turnpike at Barboursville, the county seat. During its prime in the 1830s, the turnpike’s importance as an east/west artery for all manner of travel and commerce was second only in use to the National Road. The road
was also a conduit for the transportation of slaves to the Deep South. Traveling through southwest Virginia in the 1830s, George Featherstonhaugh encountered the “singular spectacle” of slave drivers marshalling three hundred slaves across the New River. Forced to sing to banjo accompaniment, the slaves forded the river manacled and chained together in double files. In effect, the turnpike allowed for migration along the same lines of latitude. In its sometimes difficult westerly course, it intersected and interconnected seven counties in the Virginia piedmont and four in West Virginia before encountering the eastern edge of Cabell County. Significantly, as early as 1831 daily stage service from Richmond and Washington via the James and Kanawha Pike to Guyandotte existed. By 1835 the village comprised “forty dwellings, five stores, several churches, and a steam grist mill,” offering a pleasant respite for those awaiting connections to Ohio River steamers. The growing importance of the Turnpike to the village and region is further revealed by the fact that Cabell County’s largest ever slave population existed during the 1830s and 40s. In 1850 the population of Guyandotte was 1000. During the early-1850s, dams and locks built along the Guyandotte River allowed deeper navigation southward into the Guyandotte Valley, boosting commerce into and out of the hamlet. The town served as a transshipment point for a variety of items including timber, animal pelts, agricultural products, and slaves, and its future looked bright. The Guyandotte Herald predicted continued growth for the town, stating that “once the Guyandotte [River] is fairly opened, the increase of business will be beyond conception.” By the early 1850s, the town was the termination point of a stage
line from Staunton, serving “a great many travelers, traveling either eastward or westward,” as well as “the landing place of a great number of hands in transporting salt down the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers on their return to the Kanawha Salt Works.”36 Black settlers also traveled through the town. After manumission by their owner Mary Garland in 1852 (over the wishes of her two slave trading brothers—the Lumpkins) Lewis Brooks, his wife, and their ten children made their way from Richmond to Proctorville, Ohio, via Guyandotte.37

A bustling manufacturing center by 1850, Barboursville contained a number of business establishments which produced fan mills, furniture, hats, wagons, buggies, and harnesses. The town had a tannery, cooper, tailors, blacksmiths, shoemakers and several livery stables. A large mill cut large quantities of steamboat bottoms from clear oak, some of which were thirty-six feet in length which were forwarded to Jefferson, Indiana, on barges built in Barboursville. Along with timber and grain, hogs played a vital economic role. After butchering and packing in town, carcasses were sent as far as Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. Cabell County’s role in the regional economy attracted a host of businessmen, lawyers, politicians and other visitors to the area.38 Many arrived via stagecoaches which loaded and unloaded on Main Street and stayed in hotels that dotted the street.39

Combined with the weekly visits of stagecoaches through Barboursville on to Guyandotte where they met lines of stages from Lexington, Kentucky, and a line from steamboats from Cincinnati, Guyandotte served as central staging and transshipment point from the early 1830s forward.40 Steamboats serving the rivers
of the region from Gallipolis to Cincinnati, with the assistance of black labor, also deposited visitors and freight into the towns. One, the R.H. Lindsey, a double-decker boat docked in early 1855 into Barboursville. “Black porters assisted the ladies off the deck and onto the Barboursville landing, as eager boys stood by to carry their luggage to one of the fine hotels.” Steamboats also offered autonomy not found on land. Sometime in the late-1820s or early-1830s, thirteen-year-old fugitive slave Joseph Jones obtained work as a “deck sweep” on a steamboat passing Pt. Pleasant, Virginia, on its way to Cincinnati. By the end of his three year term, during which he traveled frequently to small Ohio towns housing small black populations such as Gallipolis, Point Pleasant, Ripley, and Burlington, Jones had learned to read and write, as well as “advanced far enough in arithmetic to take care of his accounts, that is, he had mastered the four fundamentals and that was considered a good education in that day.”

A fascinating look into the antebellum African American experience on the steamboats that served the rivers of the region from Gallipolis to Cincinnati is relayed through the reminiscences of white Point Pleasant, West Virginia, resident Hiram H. Swallow. Recalling his experiences Swallow notes:

On the steamboats was depicted every phase of life… The cabin boys were either all white or all black for no self respecting white boy at that time wanted to work with the slave boys employed on the boats. For while the blacks were always respectful to their superior officers nowhere in the south were relations [more] pleasant [than] when blacks and whites worked side by side on an equal footing and the insults hurled from the blacks to the whites of “Poor White Trash,” were more insulting and harder to bear than all the encomiums of Nigger” that the whites could heap… The chambermaid and her assistants were always
black. There were enough of them that they were not only the laundresses of the boats, but were always ready to take turns as ladies’ maids…

To what extent these racial and social dynamics aboard the steamship existed in the small ports that dotted the Ohio River Valley is speculative, yet, given the greater social fluidity and “openness” associated with commercial port towns, it seems plausible that African Americans in the region were able to carve out spaces of autonomy and humanity unavailable in a more closed society.

By the mid-1800s Cabell County’s citizens and residents were not removed from the mounting disagreement over the question of slavery and its place within the state’s political economy. By the mid-nineteenth-century the county increasingly operated as a nexus and crucible, located on the axis of the North and South, and slavery and freedom. On the one hand, fugitive slaves and, not infrequently, pursuing slave hunters traversed the rolling hills, creek beds, and Indian trails to cross the Ohio River into Ohio. On the other, the county’s diverse population—African American and white, free black and slave, slave and master, abolitionist and pro-slavery advocate—existed in an uneasy, unsteady dance, one that embodied the troubled posture of the nation. Emblematic of the tangled web of complex issues, actions, and thoughts related to the issue of slavery in the county and region were divisions over religious affiliation, political representation, and slavery.

Complicating the observation of one scholar who argued, “Slavery did not become a flourishing institution [in the region], and in the decades between 1840 and 1860, the demand for slave labor in the Gulf States caused the bulk of slaves
to go there,” slavery’s grip on the region tightened through the middle decades.\footnote{38} It is notable that from 1840 forward, the county’s slave population began decreasing from manumission, sell-offs, and runaways.\footnote{46} Yet, in its formative years Cabell County was what Ira Berlin labeled a “society with slaves”—a society in which slaves were never central to the economy or social structure—as distinct from “slave societies” found in the rice and cotton-growing regions of the deeper south where the political-economy was inextricably woven into the fabric of the institution, and “the master-slave relationship provided the model for all social relations.”\footnote{48} For example, in 1850 out of an aggregate Cabell County population of 5,910, only 395 African Americans resided in the county, comprising 6.1 percent of the total. Of the 395, only six free blacks, 5 males and one female resided in the county. That same year neighboring Wayne County possessed 189 slaves out of 4,500 inhabitants and 189 slaves.\footnote{49}

<table>
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<td>1*</td>
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<td>2963</td>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>4388</td>
<td>4789</td>
</tr>
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<td>60</td>
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<td>5884</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>5881</td>
<td>6299</td>
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<td>1860</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7691</td>
<td>8020</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Source: Third Census (1810), Fourth Census (1820), Seventh Census (1850), Eighth Census (1860). *1815 Tax List of Cabell County, Virginia. a) Includes 51 manumitted by Sampson Sanders.
Limited but important evidence of black peoples’ community, spirituality, and self-advocacy can be found in the diary, written between 1855 and 1871, of Cabell County businessman, dentist, and slave owner William F. Dusenberry. As early as 1850, Dusenberry attended a service by Uncle Tom, a slave and noted area Baptist preacher, who was held in such high regard by area whites that he made appointments to preach in differing neighborhoods where he would address the gathered slaves.\(^5\) An 1855 entry refers to Tom: “There was a nigger meeting in the School House this morning. Nigger Tom preached Morris’ nigger woman’s funeral.”\(^6\) That same year, Judy, “hired for one year for $40,” traveled frequently to “meetings, quilting, to help, [and] to church,” in the course of her duties.\(^7\) Another entry relays “Tom” delivering a funeral sermon in 1856 to a large slave gathering of twenty after the accidental drowning of a boy months’ earlier.\(^8\)

Indicative of the loose structure of the institution within the county, slaves were allowed to gather, observe cultural and religious practices, and have unsupervised travel. One local authority reports, “Sometimes the slave owners took slaves to preaching as both attended the same service. Other times the slaves borrowed a buggy and drove themselves to the religious meetings.”\(^9\) In effect

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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</table>

Table 1.2

Antebellum African American Population: Cabell County, Virginia.
their initiative, mobility, cultural activities, and communication provided opportunities to acquire knowledge, recreate, socialize, and perhaps, strategize.55

Some of the county’s slaves openly resisted their enslavement. Challenging the assertion by one local historian that, “From the formation of the county to 1860 there was no crisis in the affairs of the people,” the enslaved participated in various forms of agency.56 As early as 1822, local residents reported problems with escaping slaves. That year an advertisement for a “wild Negro man runaway Bob,” described him as having “a proud careless walk; plays the fiddle, supposed to have made for Ohio.”57 In 1827 fugitive slaves assisted by abolitionists who stole slaves from the county’s slaveholders, fled to freedom. Twenty years later the problem was again noted.58 In 1830, after placing “Thornton, a runaway slave,” in the county jail, three of the county’s citizens were directed to determine his value.59 In one incident in 1856, recounted in Dusenberry’s diary, his wife and cousin “attempted to lick their nigger [and] she licked them,” surely a mortifying affair for the family members: so much so, the slave woman was sold two days later in Kentucky.60 The diary also recounts two separate incidents of attempted runaways. In one incident, “Charley Morris’s Nigger who ran off last Sunday” was recaptured in Ohio and jailed in Greenup, Kentucky. In a later incident involving slaves belonging to Morris, four fugitive slave men, “Isaac, Abraham, Leonard, and Levi” were recaptured in Lawrence County, Ohio, and returned to him.61 Another relays the account of a group of slaves who “intended to meet with a lot of other niggers about three miles below Guyandotte and there cross the Ohio.”62
Undoubtedly, many runaway slaves sought to connect to the Underground Railroad, the network composed of individuals and safe-houses traversing the Ohio Valley, including in Barboursville and Guyandotte, where hundreds, perhaps thousands, of escaping slaves crossed the “River Jordan” from then Virginia into the free territory of Ohio (see Map 4). Importantly, while the network may have been less organized than previously thought and the linkages not explicitly revealed, throughout the Ohio River Valley cross-community ties linked African American individuals and communities on both sides of the river. After leaving his job as a steamboat worker and settling in Gallipolis in the late-1840s with his new wife, Temperance Reed of South Point, Ohio (located just south of Burlington), Jones became the conductor for the Gallipolis station. As a family member noted, “The thirteen years that he lived in Virginia gave him a vague idea of slavery, and he was willing to sacrifice his life if need be for the cause of freedom.” He was known never to leave home “without his two ominous-looking guns about 18 inches long. There was no chance to take possession of his men [by slave hunters] without first killing him.” Both William Chavis and James Dicher (alternately spelled Ditcher) transported runaways from Greenup County, Kentucky, and Cabell County, Virginia. Chavis brought runaways to a remote pokeberry field in Poke Patch, Ohio. Dicher, a free mulatto known as the “Red Fox of the Underground Railroad,” because of the color of his skin which resembled that of a Native American, recalls, “From 1855 to 1860, I was largely
connected with the underground railroad. I must have taken nearly 300 slaves in that time.” 68 Once across the river runaways surreptitiously traveled from farm to farm and town to town before settling in the north, with many traveling to the Great Lakes, and on to Canada. 69

Interestingly, a significant number of these incidents and developments occurred prior to the arrival of a group of abolitionists into the area led by Massachusetts Congressman Eli Thayer. In 1857, after visits to Ashland and Catlettsburg, Kentucky, and Guyandotte, he started an abolitionist community at Ceredo, Virginia, located just a few miles below nearby Barboursville and Guyandotte. The townspeople aided fugitive slaves across the river to Quaker Bottom (later Proctorville), Ohio, where they might find sanctuary and eventual safe passage on the Underground Railroad to Canada. 70 Reflecting the growing national controversy over the institution, regional and local newspaper editorials relayed the conflicting attitudes felt by locals up and down the river over the Thayer group. 71 Slaves did seek to capitalize upon the presence of abolitionist sentiment in their midst by using information gained from ministers and gossip. 72

Emerging from these accounts are examples of open and covert resistance. Runaway Asbury Parker crossed the Ohio River in 1857 to escape from Jim Rowe, his Greenup County (now Boyd County), Kentucky, master. Parker crossed the river near Guyandotte and traveled the “railroad,” where he was “advised to act like a free man” before finally joining others from the same county in Canada. 73 Another incident, recounted in a local newspaper article, notes the return to Cabell County of “a couple of old people … formerly slaves belonging to the Holderby
estate,” aged 85 and 90, who had run away with their family in 1858. “They say they stole a skiff…, and floated down to Burlington, O. where they got a wagon and went into the country.” In 1859, after hearing of John Brown’s raid at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia, Fred, a “mean” slave belonging to Conwelzie Simmons, ran away. Some weeks later, he returned to take the remaining six Simmons’ slaves to freedom, only to be captured. He, along with four other slaves implicated in the failed attempt, would be sold away to southern buyers. As detailed, the slaves of Charles Morris represented such a threat that at the outset of Civil War hostilities, Morris moved his slaves to Wytheville, Virginia, to avoid additional runaway attempts.

As throughout the South, whites attempted to use religion to placate and indoctrinate the county slaves. Speaking of the county’s slaves, one local resident relays, “Religion was a great moral force among these people, and they were not only permitted to join the church, but were encouraged to do so. They sat on the back seats, or when the church had a balcony, as they had in some churches, they occupied it. The slaves were thoroughly indoctrinated with the teachings of the Bible regarding servants. One of these verses is found in Peter 2:18, ‘Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.’ Titus 2:9 says: ‘Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well, in all things, not answering again.’” One way for a slave to escape punishment for a transgression was to abide by “The Church Covenant” and confess one’s sin. After being caught “trying to abscond” together, “a willful violation of the scriptural injunction,” Charlotte and her husband Isaac
were presented with the option of confessing before their captors. While Charlotte did so, Isaac refused. Charlotte would be granted a reprieve, while Isaac, “who didn’t know much about the Scriptures, but knew all about slavery, and had a good idea of the blessedness of freedom,” was sold down south.77

In truth, one’s loyalty, occupation, or professed faith afforded little protection from the whim of a master. After helping raise twenty children for their master Martin Moore, preacher “Uncle Tom” and “Aunt Dinah,” referred to as “splendid negroes” by one white contemporary, had to endure the loss of two sons sold at the cost of one thousand dollars each, to help Moore stave off foreclosure proceedings.78 Just before the Civil War, as a young slave girl, Mrs. Emma (“Auntie Em”) Anderson Layne remembered seeing her parents, brothers, and sisters sold at the old Buffington Street landing in Guyandotte and put on a steamboat. As she watched the crew ready the boat for departure, she spied her mother and father on deck chained to other slaves. She watched from the river bank as the boat pulled away from the landing and began its journey down the Ohio to the Deep South. She never saw any of her family again.79 These examples, as well as others above, refute the romanticized notions held by many area whites and perpetuated in family and community histories that slavery in the county and region was somehow more benign and paternalistic than in the Chesapeake Bay region or the Deep South.80

The mechanics and mechanism of migration into the region differed. Between 1840 and 1860, increasing numbers of white settlers arrived from eastern Virginia accompanied by their slaves. In 1850, out of a total population of
304,000 for the area now West Virginia, there were 3,820 slaveholders owning an average of six slaves each (11,460 total). Many of these were slaveholders came from adjoining states. A report issued by the superintendent of the 1860 census stated “that in thirty states out of thirty-four the great majority of people who moved migrated to a state immediately adjacent to the state of their birth.” In 1860, Virginia’s slave population totaled 498,887, with only 12,771 found in the forty-eight counties originally constituting the State of West Virginia.

In 1860, out of an aggregate population of 8,020, 329 African Americans, comprising 4.1 percent of the total, resided within Cabell County. Fully 305 of the 329 lived in bondage among the county’s 84 yeoman slaveholders, an average of slightly more than 3.6 persons per slaveholder (see appendix 1). Guyandotte possessed both the largest number of slaveholders and slaves, with 27 and 101, respectively, an average of 3.7 slaves per household. With 17 slaves, Guyandotte resident Susan Holderby was the largest slaveholder of the district. The district of Cabell Court House contained the second largest total, with 22 slaveholders and 88 slaves, an average of 4 slaves per household. The district contained the county’s second and third largest slaveholders, William Williams and John Morris, who held 14 and 12 slaves, respectively. Of the seven remaining county districts, only Mud Bridge possessed similar slaveholder numbers and slave household averages as that of Guyandotte and Cabell Court House.

In 1860, expanding upon numbers reached a decade earlier, female slaves outnumbered male slaves in Cabell County, a condition that existed for the county’s free population when black migrants began arriving in number in the
early 1870s.\textsuperscript{85} The increasing number of female slaves is partially explained by the fact that female slaves (and male slaves under 12) were not taxed.\textsuperscript{86} We must also consider three other realities in antebellum America that were equally significant: female slaves were cheaper than male slaves, the slave child inherited the status of the mother thus making female slaves more valuable, and female-to-male birth rates were greater.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Black Female</th>
<th>Mulatto Female</th>
<th>Black Male</th>
<th>Mulatto Male</th>
<th>Total/Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>93/30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>82/26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>51/16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>31/10.1</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28/9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13/4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7/2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>305/100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1860 Cabell County, the youngest slaves comprised the largest population cohorts. Indicative of the comparative recent arrival of the institution within the county, the reliance upon those most physically fit, the historically greater value of adolescents, and the intrinsic value of long-term capital investment, 27 percent (82) of the county’s slaves—44 female and 38 male—were aged ten to nineteen. Slaves under the age of twenty comprised 57 percent (175)—95 females and 80 males—of the county’s total. Expanding the age cohort to consider those under thirty further supports the above contentions, as 226 (74%)—121 females
and 105 males--of the enslaved population fell below the age of thirty. Reflective of trends within the general slave population, the county’s mulatto population was concentrated in the young. Naturally, increasing numbers of mulatto parents produced greater numbers of mulatto children as the Civil War neared. A larger percentage of those being born (or purchased) were female.87

Examination of Greenbottom, “with 4,444 acres, the largest slave plantation in Cabell, Wayne and Mason counties in 1850 and 1860,” allows further entry into the black circumstance in antebellum as well as immediate postbellum Cabell County.88 Located in the upper northwestern corner of the county adjacent to the Ohio River, Greenbottom was owned and operated by various members of the influential Jenkins family, including entrepreneur and businessman Captain William A. Jenkins and later his son, Confederate Brigadier General Albert G. Jenkins. In 1850, the Jenkins family owned 58 slaves, 23 males and 35 females, with 88 percent (91 percent of males and 83 percent of females) of the slave population aged thirty-five or younger. Fully 65 percent of the males and 54 percent of the female slaves were fifteen or younger ensuring that a significant number of the Jenkins’s slave population would be entering adulthood as well as their prime labor and reproductive periods as the decade progressed. The 1850 schedule cites only one mulatto within the Jenkins’s slave population.89

In 1850, Captain Jenkins valued the plantation at $80,000, with 1500 acres improved for use out of the total acreage of 2395. Upon his death in 1859, his three sons (William, Thomas, and Albert) took over, expanding the total acreage improved to 1700 acres by 1860. By 1860, the three sons were quite wealthy. The
aggregate land value owned by the three was $195,000 ($65,000 each) with the
next highest value in the county owned by John Morris ($105,000) followed by
Peter Buffington ($50,000), who had two farms. In 1860, the Jenkins’ sons
possessed the highest value of farm implements and equipment and in products
produced the highest crop yields in the county. The Jenkins’ slaves produced the
highest yield in wheat (2200 bushels) and Indian corn (7000 bushels), and
produced the second highest yield in potatoes (300 bushels) and butter (1300 lbs).
The slaves also produced $200 worth of fruit and 100 bushes of oats. The slaves
tended to the largest number of cattle (425) (compared with the second largest of
150), the largest number of swine (300) (compared with the second largest of
200), the largest number of horses on one plantation (46) (compared with 16 on
the second largest plantation), and the second largest number of both milk cows
(34) and oxen (19). Slave production and oversight enabled the plantation to
have the county’s highest value of livestock at $12,300, compared to $6000 for
the second ranked plantation. No homemade manufactured products were
reported by the plantation in either 1850 or 1860. And, the plantation did not raise
tobacco, beans and peas, flax, grass seed, hay, produce, or buckwheat, nor did it
produce wine, maple sugar, beeswax, honey, molasses or wool, like others in the
county. Thus, slave labor on the Jenkins Plantation primarily revolved around the
myriad tasks associated with field work, tending livestock and raising horses.

Slaves at Greenbottom did suffer physical violence and sexual coercion.
Though Captain Jenkins was known to be “somewhat cruel,” his “overseers were
particularly so.” To punish or coerce the plantation’s slaves overseer D. B. Scott
regularly employed a sycamore log with large “staples” in it. After tying a slave to the staples, Scott whipped, and then salted them. After Scott’s departure, the next overseer employed by Captain Jenkins, Lewis Page, regularly raped the slave women. In at least one instance his rape of slave “Mary” produced a son.92

In 1850, free blacks in the county faced renewed threats to their status. That year a Virginia law “required an owner to provide for any freed slave for the rest of the slave’s natural life [a potentially expensive proposition]. Any former slave who remained in the state could be returned to servitude for failure to pay taxes, failing to show an acceptable means of support, forgetting to present himself before the county justices each year, or simply by someone[‘s] claiming that he was an escaped slave.” Between 1850 and 1860, those free blacks who registered with the court were invariably granted approval to remain in the county.93 In 1861 a Cabell County ruling reaffirmed the necessity for free Negroes to petition the court annually.94

In 1860, a smattering of free blacks lived in the county. As the head of household of a family of eight, including her six daughters and her sixty-five-year-old mother Delphia, thirty-eight-year-old Mary Haley was unique. The Guyandotte resident was one of only 24 free people residing within the county, one of only two women (along with twenty-year-old laundry woman Nancy Anderson) who was head of a household, one of only three black heads of a household (along with Isham Sanders and Lewis Fullerton), and head of the largest all-black household and family in the county. Moreover, behind farmer Stephen Witcher and Fullerton, who possessed $150 and $100, respectively, in
personal property, her $40 in personal property made her the wealthiest freewoman, and the third wealthiest free person (along with Sanders who also possessed $40 in property) in the county.

In contrast to the county’s mulatto slave population, which comprised 29.5 percent of the total slave population, the county’s free mulatto population comprised 42 percent (10/24) of the total free black population. The bulk was found in the county’s more populated districts. Of the ten, Guyandotte Post Office contained the most mulattoes with five, followed by Barboursville and Guyandotte Township, with two each. Cabell Court House contained one. Six of the ten free blacks resided in white households; all were mulatto.

Although the number of free black females, like slave females, was greater than free black males, the division was greater than that reflected in the slave population. In comparison to the 1860 female slave population, which comprised 55.4 percent of the general slave population, free black females, including the eight females of the Haley family, comprised 62.5 percent (15/24) of the county’s free black population. These fifteen were found in seven households, averaging 2.1 per household. However, removal of the Haley family from the equation shows an average of slightly more than 1 black female per household. Study of the age ratios within the county’s free black population shows it was disproportionally older than the slave population. Forty-two percent (10/24) were fifty-five or over, seventeen percent (4/24) were aged 30-54, while forty-two percent (10/24) were aged 1-29. Thus, fifty-nine percent of the free black population was aged thirty and above.
During the Civil War, the county, rent by the divided allegiances of its populace, was a microcosm of the protracted and fractious nature of the sectional schism that produced the natural resource-rich thirty-fifth state. In direct contrast to the State of Virginia, whose people voted to secede from the Union, Cabell County’s citizens voted to remain in it. However, the town of Guyandotte voted to secede. Thus, within the county, families and clans split, literally brother against brother, cousin against cousin. In 1861, the first battle of the war within the county occurred in Barboursville on Fortification Hill. Later that year, the town of Guyandotte, by now a small, bustling river port, was nearly burnt to the ground by Union forces retaliating against a Confederate raid.96 For many, the issue of slavery was not nearly as important as the threat of Northerners to their way of life, and the social, economic and political dominance exerted by slave holders in the Chesapeake Bay area. However, for significant numbers of western Virginians sentiments situating black people as inferior remained conspicuous. 97

Slaves within the county, like those within the region, took advantage of the fluid state of affairs during the Civil War. Historian Forrest Talbott argues that the state’s black population declined 13.5 percent during the decade of the war, while the number of whites entering the state during the same period grew by twenty-five per cent.98 In his study of fugitive slaves in Kentucky, another Border State, J. Blaine Hudson concludes, “more fugitives crossed the Ohio River near Owensboro in four months in late 1861 than had done so in the previous fifty years.”99 Throughout the Ohio River Valley, blacks fled to northern towns and cities during the war. Joe Trotter relays, “In rising numbers, fugitive slaves and
free blacks left the Confederate states and moved into Union territory. Under the impact of wartime migration, Louisville’s black population dramatically increased from 6,800 to nearly 15,000, Cincinnati’s rose from 3,730 to 5,900, Pittsburgh’s from less than 2,000 to 3,200; Evansville’s from no more than 100 to 1,400.”

Slaves fleeing the region “to make their war-born freedom secure in a free state” help explain the drop in the county’s African American population during the decade from 329 to 123. Recounting his encounter with a “thousands of refugees” accompanying Union General Joseph A. Lightburn down the Kanawha Valley, Jones explains, “Among them were a group of slaves fleeing to a place of safety, they landed at the wharf at Gallipolis. I was on the dray with Tom Holmes, the man who worked for my father. These people laughed, cried and shouted for hours. I have never seen people so happy as they were, some of them would get down and kiss the ground.”

Certainly, Andy Gwinn of Lower Creek, Cabell County, lamented the loss of several of his slaves who fled during the war.

During the state’s formative years African Americans confronted post-emancipation Appalachia white paternalism, stereotypes, and racism which propelled negative perceptions and attitudes of black capability and progress. As one authority notes, “southern mountaineers were first and foremost southerners and that they viewed slavery and race not unlike those of their yeoman or even slaveholding counterparts elsewhere in the South.” More pointedly, Appalachian James C. Klotter notes, “Blacks in slavery and freedom were often stereotyped by whites as a lazy but wily people who believed in spirits and witches, as an immoral race in which illegitimacy was not uncommon, as an
inferior class that seemed to cower in subordination when talking with whites, and—paradoxically—as a violent, savage people who needed ‘civilization’ and religion’s guiding hand.”

Slaves in Cabell County as well as throughout West Virginia were not freed by the Emancipation Proclamation but by an act of the state legislature in February 1865. One scholar argues however that the act had little effect on the practice of slavery because blacks did not actually gain their freedom until the end of the Civil War. Thus, the state’s black residents were forced to wait another two years after the Proclamation for their freedom, certainly an exceedingly difficult proposition for many seeking to “seize the moment” and flee and/or leave the county. Indeed, white residents were sharply divided over the status of slavery in the new state constitution, but had no issue with agreeing to a Negro exclusion policy that would ban either slave importation or free black migration into the state. Consequently, the question of immediate or gradual emancipation for the State’s slaves had embroiled the Constitutional Convention of 1863 in contentious debate. Refuting arguments (while simultaneously denigrating Negroes) by those fearful that the state would soon be overrun by free Negroes, Senator Waitman T. Willey stated in the state Constitutional Convention of 1863, “There is nothing in the soil or climate of West Virginia to attract a free negro, but much to repel him. Besides, the kind of labor which will be required here, will not be of a character to induce his employment.” Ultimately, Lincoln’s prerequisite for statehood forced the hand of state legislators who passed the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865.
The end of the Civil War only amplified apprehension within the state over the nature and extent of black citizenship. In truth, many white residents (like whites throughout the south) feared that every gain achieved by freedmen and women after the Civil War would result in a loss of white stature and authority, a difficult prospect for many trapped in the past.\textsuperscript{109} Yet, despite these sentiments, the state legislature’s gradualist approach to recognizing black citizenship rights produced results. In 1866 the state legislature in Charleston took steps addressing African American citizenship, the same year legal marriages between Negroes were first recognized. In due time, blacks were allowed to act as witnesses in the courts, and the Fourteenth Amendment was ratified. Intense debate over how to incorporate the substantial number of Confederates who were barred from voting by test oaths ignited passions that endangered the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment. An 1867 \textit{New York Herald} editorial on the question of Negro suffrage, reprinted in the \textit{Union Register} of southern West Virginia’s Monroe County undoubtedly articulated the views of many whites:

\begin{quote}
Shall this continent be given up to barbarism for a fanatical experiment and a party scheme? This and none other, is now the question before the American people. Shall we throw away what we have have (sic) acquired of science and civilization, blot out our history, give up all aspirations of the future, that the nigger may become supreme and restore the land to that happy state of nature in which Africa now is? Is Africa such a magnificent evidence of the nigger’s greatness that the example of its history should induce us to change our system for his?\textsuperscript{110}
\end{quote}
In fact, in 1868 African American residents had the following basic rights:

They could leave the State and then return; they could gather together without restriction; their education was both permitted and provided, if they were under twenty-one years of age; they were tried and punished in the same manner as whites and could give competent testimony against whites; their marital rights were recognized and an unmarried colored mother could force the support of her child; and they could serve in separate companies of the militia, though actively only in cases of emergency. Negroes could not, in 1868, vote and hold office; they could not serve in juries; they were segregated in schools and were to remain so under constitutional mandate; and on many minor points they were discriminated against both legally and extra-legally.\textsuperscript{111}

After another two years of legislative and gubernatorial debate, some highly charged and inflammatory, the question of black suffrage was finally settled. In 1870, with the passage of the hard fought Flick Amendment, the test oaths were finally repealed and the Fifteenth Amendment passed.\textsuperscript{112} Some months’ later fifty-six blacks in Clarksburg and five in Weston became the first to vote in West Virginia municipal elections.\textsuperscript{113}

These measures did little to stem the tide of black out-migration from the state. Affiliated with out-migration during the war years, black population throughout the region declined between 1860 and 1870. Confederate sentiment and limited economic opportunities in the immediate post war years compelled out-migration.\textsuperscript{114} There were some who freed their slaves after the Civil War.\textsuperscript{115} In fact, 20 percent of southern West Virginia black residents moved out of the state after emancipation.\textsuperscript{116} For example, although the black population of Mercer
County increased slightly from 391 to 394 in the decade from 1860 to 1870, it decreased 5.4 percent in Kanawha County, home to Charleston, 18 percent in Monroe, 22 percent in Jefferson, and 36 percent in Greenbrier. In 1860, each of these three counties had a Negro population exceeding 10 percent, in contrast to Cabell County’s 6.6 percent.

There were also those freedmen who explored the region but remained rooted to the county. Four years after the end of the Civil War, William F. Dusenberry’s diary entries detail the logical nature of trips by “Black William,” an employee of “Robert,” who was an associate of Dusenberry.

“Thursday, January 8, 1869
[R]obert and his nigger staid last night at Hiltbruners.

Saturday, April 11, 1869
Robert’s black man William was here and staid.

Wednesday, April 28, 1869
Black William brought me some strawberry plants from Raffe’s.

Sunday, May 23, 1869
Black William went to Cincinnati on the Ohio at noon.

Wednesday, June 2, 1869
Black William came down and went up the river on the Hudson.

Tuesday, August 31, 1869
Black William who used to work for Robert came her and staid.

Tuesday, September 7, 1869
Black William came from the mill. (Staid all night).

Wednesday, November 17, 1869
Robert’s nigger staid at Bakeys.”
Importantly, William’s travels suggest three key points: first, that he possessed the capacity and resources to travel; second, that he initiated and maintained social contacts throughout the county and region; and lastly, that he possessed the ability to negotiate terms to ensure his continued well-being. Yet while the entries reveal William’s mobility, they also illuminate the racist regard in which he was still held, and the potential ramifications of his travels.

Though it is impossible to ascertain the reason or reasons why, or how “faithful and kindly” their former masters were, a few blacks did remain with their former masters (or their kin) after emancipation.120 For most slaves, severing established daily routines, cultural practices, and social linkages, and contemplation of the consequences (real or imagined) of such actions required remarkable psychological strength and a deep, abiding faith. Undoubtedly, each former slave (and free person) encountered a range of emotions, options, and thoughts upon Emancipation. For many freed-persons, the rational assessment was to stay.

Yet, what are we to make of Mary Lacy’s decision to stay near her former masters, the Jenkinses, given that upon his death in 1859 Captain Jenkins’ will instructed that she and her son be sold to the highest bidder among his three sons? In 1860, the twenty-five year-old slave and caretaker was the mother of a five-year-old son, George. In 1870, she and George, now a farm laborer, along with former slave twelve-year-old Christine and John P., her three-year old mulatto son, moved into the white household of James B. Bowlin, where she served as caretaker of Albert G. Jenkins’ children. They were joined in the household by
Anderson Rose, a thirty-five-year-old farm laborer and former slave of Captain Jenkins. Later, she served in the same position within the household of Thomas Jefferson Jenkins, son of the late Captain Jenkins, until his death in 1873. Only after Thomas Jenkins’s passing did Lacy leave the Jenkineses with George, stating that “she had seen too much death,” and settle elsewhere in the county. 121

Undoubtedly, each former slave (and free person) encountered a range of emotions, options, and thoughts upon Emancipation. Given that her occupational and social terrain operated within the interwoven contours of labor, family, and community, Lacy’s decision to stay with her former masters, like tens of thousands throughout the south, should not be viewed as unique or unexpected. For many freed-persons, the rational assessment was to stay. 122 But, importantly, when Lacy felt it time to move on, she demonstrated she was capable of doing so.

In summation, located adjacent to the Ohio River in western Virginia, mere yards away from the shore of freedom, and far removed from Richmond and the rigidity of societal norms and laws imposed by the landed gentry of the region, the African American experience in ante-bellum Cabell County embodied and reflected the paradoxes and contradictions, challenges and joys of life in a society with slaves. 123 In the predominately rural and sparsely populated frontier county, slave and master worked the yeomanry farms in closer proximity than generally seen in the large plantations of the Chesapeake Bay region, a dynamic that also characterized the nature of slave and free black relations in the county’s two main commercial centers—Guyandotte and Barboursville. In a few instances, the physical and social proximity between the races engendered greater autonomy,
even manumission, for the county’s slaves. In others, it afforded opportunities for courageous slaves to exploit in the quest for freedom and humanity. For most, however, it offered no protection from the depredations attendant to the yoke of slavery. Slavery would remain the one constant in their lives until death.

The Civil War initiated a shift in the balance of power within Cabell County. What had been in 1860 was no more. By 1863, the former Cabell County, Virginia, was no longer a part of Virginia. It, along with a significant portion of the state’s western expanse, was now firmly ensconced within the embryonic state of West Virginia. The county’s former 305 slaves, 24 freepersons, and 84 slaveholders now faced profound choices. Now emancipated, many African Americans--male and female, black and mulatto, young and old, individual and family--across the county left to seek their future elsewhere, as did many of the county’s free blacks. In their strivings and responses, African Americans would help define the nature of space, autonomy, and work within Huntington’s embryonic post-bellum urban-industrial economy. The tragedy of this process and transformation is that although slavery within Cabell County differed from that in other regions in Virginia and the south, in the post-war period the lives of the county’s black residents became like it and other African Americans in the South as the city’s white residents and leaders increasingly embraced the tenets and practices of Jim Crowism.
5 Historical geographer Edward K. Muller’s model of regional growth provides helpful perspective, describing three distinct phases of regional development. In the “pioneer” phase, settlers established communities far removed from commercial markets. Low population and the time and energy required to establish homes and farms hindered the development of agriculture beyond subsistence needs. Transportation was confined to a few natural routes. However, with increasing settler influx and population growth, communities passed into a second “specialized” phase. Intra- and interregional connections improved, resulting in increasing settlement and the beginnings of commercial agricultural and manufacturing. In the final “transitional” phase, national transportation and marketing systems, especially railroads, integrated communities into the national economy. Cited from Kenneth Noe, “Appalachia’s Civil War Genesis: Southwest Virginia as Depicted by Northern and European Writers, 1825-1865,” *West Virginia History*, Vol. 50 (1991), 98.
6 In contrast to one authority’s contention that Appalachians “hated slavery,” recent scholarship reveals slavery to be more tightly woven into the fabric of the region’s economy than previously held. Carter G. Woodson, “Freedom and Slavery in Appalachian America,” *Journal of Negro History* 1 (2) (1916): 132-50, John C. Inscoe, *Mountain Masters, Slavery and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1989), Charles B. Dew, *Bond of Iron: Master and Slave at Buffalo Forge* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), Kenneth W. Noe, *Southwest Virginia’s Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994). Indeed, as Wilma A. Dunaway argues, “… the tendency has been to idealize this region as less racist and to overstate the degree to which its white residents were opposed to slavery.” Wilma A. Dunaway, *Slavery in the American Mountain South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5. Another authority maintains, “There is no reason to believe that slavery was particularly mild in Appalachia as compared with other areas in the Old South.” Richard B. Drake, “Slavery and Antislavery in Appalachia,” *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation*, ed. John C. Inscoe (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 17.
7 Ibid. Unfortunately, the first census of the county, taken in 1810, along with those of seventeen other Virginia counties, was destroyed by the British during the war of 1812. The 1820 census thus serves as the county’s first extant federal population enumeration. Oscar T. Adkins, *Cabell County, Virginia (now West Virginia) Families 1820* (n.p., 1996), Introduction, Special Collections, Cabell County Public Library, Huntington, WV.
8 Mrs. John Kyle, “Early History of Little Seven Mile Community: Cabell County, W.Va.,” (Morgantown, West Virginia: Agricultural Extension Division, n.d.), 1, Thornton Taylor Perry, II, Collection, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia. Speaking of the early settlers in the eastern section of Cabell County, one authority states, “Most of the early settlers on Mud River, and especially between Milton and Barboursville, came from eastern Virginia, or from other sections of the South. Like other settlers in a new country nearly all of them, together with their families, engaged in farm labor and other neighborhood enterprise. Most of them belonged to the class of comfortable livers, when they worked to that end. Not a few of them, in addition to their own families, brought a number of slaves from the older settled sections. Slavery existed in its mildest form here, and while by no means universal, it was quite general. Most of the slave groups consisted of only a few negroes, but a few farms assumed the proportions of plantations and the number of slaves exceeded a half-hundred.” See Frank Lee Burdette, “History of Ona and Surrounding Country, Past and Present,” *Agricultural Extension Division Community Histories*, West Virginia Archives and History, West Virginia Division of Culture and History, [http://www.wvculture.org/history/agrext/agrindex.html](http://www.wvculture.org/history/agrext/agrindex.html) (accessed January 23, 2008). Burdette lists
the following as slave owners in “the neighborhood”: “John Morris, John and Nathan Everett; Charles, William, and Daniel Love; John, Henry, and Thomas Dundas and their sisters, Miss Eliza Dundas and Mrs. Sophia Peyton; Sampson Handley; William P. Yates; Jonathan Switzer; Dr. Alexander McCorkle; David Harshbarger; Thomas, Chapman and Beverly Maupin; Adam and William Black; James Newman; Andrew Guinn; John Miller; William Simmons; Thomas, George and Jeremiah Killgore; and Mrs. Martha Saunders and son Sampson Saunders.” Burdette refers to Sanders. Saunders and Sanders were used interchangeably during the era.

10 Carrie Eldridge, Cabell County VA/WV Minute Book, 1809-1815 (n.p.: n.d.), Special Collections, Cabell County Public Library, Huntington, WV.
11 The following May, John Chapman arrived into the county, accompanied by his slaves, seventeen-year-old Jo, and fifteen-year-old Frank. In November 1814, an unidentified individual brought Barbary, a five-year-old “malotte” (mulatto) from North Carolina. Carrie Eldridge, Abstracts of Deed Book 1, 1808-1814, Cabell County Virginia/West Virginia, Special Collections, Cabell County Public Library, Huntington, WV, 30, 40, and 41.

12 With eighteen slaves, William C. Nicholas possessed the largest number. The county’s second largest slaveholders were Thomas Kilgore and Elisha McComas, both of whom owned 10 slaves each. Netti Schreiner-Yantis, 1815 Tax List of Cabell County, Virginia (n.p., 1971), 1-10, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia. Caldwell traded in property to the county’s white residents including William Merritts, John Laidley and Asolum Holderby. The 1820 Federal Census identifies Caldwell’s age as “45 and over.” The last will and testament of “Cupp (otherwise known as Cuff Caldwell), free black man” was presented to the Cabell County Court July 27, 1829. His estate was appraised at $376. See U.S. Bureau of the Census, Fourth Census of the United States, 1820 (Washington, D.C.: GPO), “Slavery, railroad brought black community to lower Ohio Valley,” Jean McClelland, Herald Dispatch (Huntington, WV), February 9, 2004;

Carr Brandridge, Will Book I, 1820-1848, Cabell County Virginia/West Virginia (n.p.: n.d.), 16, and Extracts from the Records of the County Court of Cabell County, West Virginia, From January 2, 1809 to July 6, 1863, Minute Book No. 3, comp. R.S. Douthat, County Clerk, 1932, 67, Special Collections, Cabell County Public Library, Huntington, WV.

13 Addressing the connection between capitalism and slavery, Stanley Elkins provides important perspective when he notes, “The planter was now engaged in capitalistic agriculture with a labor force entirely under his control. The personal relationship between master and slave—in any case less likely to exist on large agricultural units than on smaller ones—now became far less important than the economic necessities which had forced the slave into this ‘unnatural’ organization in the first place.” Stanley M. Elkins, Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life 3rd ed., rev. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 49.

14 “Slavery,” Box 3, Number 5, in the Fred B. Lambert Papers (hereafter FBLP), #76, 32, Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV.

Carrie Eldridge, Cabell County’s Empire for Freedom: The Manumission of Sampson Sanders’ Slaves (Huntington, WV: The John Deaver Drinko Academy for American Political Institution and Civic Culture, Marshall University, 1999), xi. Perspective on the impact of this law is gained from Luther P. Jackson’s contention that “This act effectively demarcated the end of the “the liberality and high idealism of the Revolutionary period” within the state and was a response to both Toussaint L’Overture’s revolution in Haiti and Gabriel Prosser’s insurrection in Richmond in 1800, as well as the development of the cotton gin and its impact on the industrial revolution. See Luther P. Jackson, “Manumission in Certain Virginia Cities,” The Journal of Negro History, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Jul., 1930): 287-8.

There were no court recorded manumissions in Cabell County from 1807 to 1816. Corresponding decisions in Richmond and Petersburg had the same effect. Jackson, “Manumission in Certain Virginia Cities,” 289.

Manumission granted after petition to the court by her owner Jeremiah Ward. Eldridge, Cabell County’s Empire for Freedom, 20. Originally listed as “Pig,” it is likely the court meant to cite Peg, which is a diminutive of Margaret.

18 Jackson, 290.

Moreover, Virginia required the former owner to provide for the manumitted slave after manumission to prevent him/her from becoming burdens on the community. Eldridge, Cabell County’s Empire for Freedom, 37. Also see William Walter Henning, The Statutes at Large: Being a Collection of All the Laws of Virginia, From the First Session of the Legislature in the Year 1619, vols. I and II (New York: R & W & G Bartow, 1823).

In 1822, Samuel returned to the court to on the first day of June to submit his petition to reside in the county. The court denied Samuel’s petition after “the applicant having produced his testimony as to extraordinary acts of merit, and the court having considered the same deems the testimony insufficient and the application be overruled.” Bickley, “Black People and the Huntington Experience,” 124.

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22 Bickley, 125. For Jane, see Book 4, Cabell County, WV Court Records, 1814-1866, 121.

23 In 1804, the Ohio legislature legally mandated that free blacks and mulattoes provide proof of their freedom upon entering the state. In 1807, the state strengthened such restrictions by requiring free blacks and mulattoes who settled into the state to post a $500 bond to guarantee their ability to support themselves. A series of harsher measures were passed by the Indiana legislature. In 1815, Indiana passed a law requiring a $500 annual poll tax on all adult black and mulatto men. In 1831, the state mandated that all free blacks register and post bond to guarantee “good behavior” and practicable employment against becoming “public charge.” In 1851, the anti-black restrictions intensified when the state adopted a new constitution barring blacks from settlement altogether. Kentucky was no different. In 1818, the state forbade the immigration of free blacks from elsewhere. Moreover, in 1834, the state passed a law requiring free blacks to post bond in order to remain in the state. See Joe W. Trotter, Jr., River Jordan: African American Urban Life in the Ohio Valley (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 25.

24 Eldridge, Cabell County’s Empire for Freedom, xiii, xiv.

25 Ibid., 36, 51-55. The manumitted Sanders slaves were: Ada and Zeebeedee, both 87; Solomon, his wife Phyllis and their children, Eli, Levi, Solomon Jr., Woodford, Jacob, and Jason; Daniel, his wife Dorcos and their children, Alicia, Montesque, Zebedee, Eliza, Robert, William, Elijah, and Hamilton; Charles and his sister Mary and her children, Susan, Joseph, Harriet, Mahala, Charles, and twins Theodore and Sampson; Cynthia Sanders Radford and her son Jacob; Margaret and her son Eli; Charlotte and her daughter Jane; James Sanders; Peter Sanders; Eli Sanders; Calvin Sanders (an adult who returned to the Ironton area); Calvin Sanders (a child); John Sanders; Luke, his wife Jane and their children; Columbus and Mary; Moses, his wife Caroline and their children, Albert and Robert; Hamilton Sanders (an adult); and Isom Sanders (who remained in Cabell County).

26 George K. Hesslink, Black Neighbors: Negroes in a Northern Rural Community (Indianapolis and New York: The Bobb-Merrill Company, Inc., 1968), 44. Hesslink stipulates that with the arrival of the Sanders group, “the number of Negroes in the county rose to 389 with 158 of these clustered in Calvin Township. Thus, by 1850, 25.3 per cent of the population of that township was Negro.” Interestingly, two slaves who failed to travel were “Uncle Solomon” and “Uncle Davie,” both “Guinea negroes which were brought by slave traders to this country.” Sampson Sanders’s daughter relays of the two, “They were full of superstitions and had many hair raising stories of witches to tell to us children. Both were dark brown negroes. Solomon had a snow white spot or birth mark on the side of his face, reaching from his chin toward his ear and down his neck…They were both quite old when I remember them. I do not know what became of them after Grandfather Sanders died.” See Mrs. (George T.) Naomi Klipsten, “The Lincoln Family, Fry Family, Spurlock Family, Hager Family,” Memoirs of Sampson Sanders Family, Box 9, Number 9, FBLP, #76, Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, 83.

27 “Old Times: The Exodus of the 37 Blacks from Va., to Burlington in 1849,” The Ironton Register, March 5, 1896.

See J. Earl Platt, *The Promised Land* (New York: Vantage Press, Inc., 1964), forward, 15, 18, and Carrie Eldridge, *Freedom Across the Water* (n.p., 2004) xii, 1, 2. Eldridge writes that in actuality, the “37” manumitted slaves were forty-six persons due to the fact that “under aged children were rarely identified in legal documents.” In total, “forty to forty-one came to Lawrence County, not the famous ‘Burlington 37.’” See also “Slaves Using Underground Hid in Campbell Mansion,” *Ironton Register* (Ohio), February 24, 1949.


Used over the decades by travelers, surveyors, merchants, settlers, slave traders, soldiers, generals, refugees, free and freed people who walked much of its length, this Appalachian thoroughfare known officially as the James River and Kanawha Turnpike, originated in Richmond, Virginia. From Richmond, the road followed the James River watershed to Lexington, Virginia, just across the Alleghany Mountains from West Virginia. Constructed between 1830 and 1850 and now roughly paralleled by U.S. Route 60 and Interstate 64, it was largely composed of river trails, ridges, and horse paths that wound their way across the Alleghany Mountains before ending in Lexington, Kentucky.

The turnpike, local authority Carrie Eldridge explains, “offered daily stagecoaches pulled by six horses between Richmond and the Ohio’s steamboats. Numerous stage hands and taverns, serving statesmen, speculators, and peddlers, dotted its route. In 1831 the mail was carried by the stages. The route saw drovers passing with thousands of hogs, cattle and even turkeys headed east. Freight wagons and family Conestoga wagons added to the confusion of dust, mud and noise. The James River and Kanawha Turnpike was second only to the National Road as the way west.” Carrie Eldridge, *An atlas of Appalachian trails to the Ohio River* (Huntington, WV: CDN Printing Inc., 1998), 29, Special Collections, Cabell County Public Library, Huntington, WV. Former Barboursville resident J. W. Miller describes the turnpike thusly, “When the West was settled, and trade began flowing East again, it went to Pittsburgh and through Pennsylvania. Virginia built three good turnpikes to divert travel through that state again. And so we were given the Kanawha and James River Turnpike, which ran from Covington, Virginia, to the Big Sandy, and to this day remains the great National Highway. There were toll gates every four miles, and mile stones at every mile along the way. It was well built, and well kept up. Immigration and general travel was at all times heavy, immigrants going West in covered wagons, with their dogs and tar bucket tied to the hind of the ox in harness. The old stage coach, drawn by four horses carrying twelve or more passengers would make good time. And when travel was especially heavy, we had two stages a day. There was heavy travel from the South, too, by carriages; these were most wealthy and prosperous planters on their way to the White Sulphur Springs. All livestock was driven to market over this road. Hogs were started from Kentucky half fattened, traveled about eight miles per day, and were fattened along the road; they were finally packed in Richmond.” J. W. Miller, “History of Barboursville Community,” [data online], accessed on July 17, 2008, available from http://www.wvculture.org/history/agrext/barbours.html.


Seventh Census of the United States, 1850, *Compendium*, 357.

Geiger, “The Tragic Fate of Guyandotte,” 29

*Extracts from the Records of the County Court of Cabell County, West Virginia, From January 2, 1809 to July 6, 1863*, Minute Book No. 6, 167.

“Slave Days,” *Ironton Register*, November 12, 1896.

Dunaway’s study on the slave experiences in Central Appalachia, *Slavery in the American Mountain South*, illuminates extensive trading and transportation networks radiating to and from the region’s hamlets, towns and villages. As illustrated, Guyandotte and Barboursville operated as
a way-station in this network from the early-nineteenth century forward. Incorporated into both national and world markets, this multi-tiered and integrated regional economy employed and utilized large numbers of black Appalachians across a variety of activities. In fact, the region’s slaves and free blacks engaged in public works projects, livestock driving, horse racing, servicing mountain spas, and canal, rail, and river transportation, affording frequent opportunities for wide travel throughout the region, communication with a broad spectrum of black laborers, and the establishment of key contacts. Dunaway reports, “About 6 percent of the region’s slaves were employed full time in commerce and trade. More than 10 percent of the slave hires were contracted with commercial enterprises, like stores, shops, inns, hotels, and travel resorts. Between 1850 and 1860, Appalachian masters were probably hiring out nearly six thousand slaves per year to work as laborers and artisans in commerce and trade. Throughout the region, black Appalachians supplied labor for public works, for retail shops, for inns and hotels, and for artisan shops…” See Slavery in the Mountain South, pp. 70-102.

39 Geiger, Civil War in Cabell County, West Virginia, 2-3.
40 “The Kanawha Road ,” Box 5, Number 10, FBLP, #76, 35, 55-73.
41 Frances B. Gunter, “Barboursville,” (n.p., 1986), 21, West Virginia & Regional History Collection, Charles C. Wise, Jr., Library, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV. See also Miller, “History of Barboursville Community.”
42 Jones traveled 400 miles from Richmond to the Ohio River to gain freedom. Upon reaching the bank of the Kanawha River near Point Pleasant, Virginia, “where he could see the state of Ohio,” Jones, great-uncle to future West Virginia State College president J. McHenry Jones, waved to a steamboat, which the captain took as a signal for him to land. After inquiring if there was any work aboard the vessel, Jones gained employment. After docking in Cincinnati, Jones was “induced by the captain and first mate to admit his inability to read or write,” and his desire to learn to do both. The captain then “secured the necessary books and a slate and gave him his first lesson before leaving Cincinnati on their return trip.” Jones would remain with the crew and boat for three years. See John L. Jones, “The Story of the Jones Family,” History of the Jones Family, edited and annotated by Nancy E. Aiken and Michel S. Perdreau (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, Inc., 2001), Local History, Athens County Library Services, Nelsonville, Ohio, 3-27.

43 “Looking Backward Eighty Years: Reminiscences as Gleaned from Mr. Hiram H. Swallow and Others Who Remember the Past of this Locality. Article II,” History of Mason County, West Virginia (Cincinnati, O: George A. Flour CO., 1963), 4, Special Collections, Cabell County Public Library, Huntington, WV.

44 Such a dynamic existed for black steamboat workers in antebellum Mississippi. Before gaining his freedom as a fugitive slave, and notoriety for his autobiography Narrative of William Wells Brown, A Fugitive Slave, William Wells Brown worked as a waiter aboard a steamboat that plied the Mississippi River. Though a slave, Brown relished the moments of autonomy travel aboard the boat afforded. Recounting his experiences, Thomas Buchanan relays Brown remembered that he “found great difference between the work in a steamboat cabin and in a cornfield.” Thomas C. Buchanan, Black Life on the Mississippi: Slaves, Free Blacks, and the Western Steamboat World (University of North Carolina, 2004), 3. Free blacks also lived in Barboursville. “Uncle Steve,” “a very large man,” and “Aunt Annie,” “a very tiny woman,” resided in the village in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Steve, who worked in town as well as maintained a small farm, used an old nag to help cultivate the fields. Annie baked ginger bread and kept cider for sale, and it was a treat for area whites to visit “Aunt Annie’s” on Court days and holidays to purchase her wares. See “Slavery,” Box 3, Number 4, FBLP, #76, 5.

45 Schisms began to appear in the late 1820s. One prominent issue of the era revolved around the issue of representation and suffrage. Between 1829 and 1833, Virginians engaged in a series of protracted, and often divisive, debates over the essential nature of law and government in a modern republic. These debates revealed the abiding class and social tensions between whites on both sides of the Alleghany Mountains. Whites in the east favored “freehold” representation based on property and taxation, while those in the west favored “manhood” representation in which all, regardless of property, income, or religion were allowed to vote. At the time, Virginia was the only state of twenty-four to adhere to freehold suffrage. Often referred to by easterners as “peasants,” who, by intimation, occupied an inferior status in the Chesapeake Bay area, white-
laboring westerners quoted the Bill of Rights and Thomas Jefferson’s agrarian republic ideas in their quest to acquire greater political representation within the state. In effect, the disagreements reflected diverging economic and commercial practices indicative of an emerging industrial economy. The Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1829-1830 addressed the issue and in the resulting compromise, heavily slanted to the designs of easterners, the convention agreed to reduce the conditions of a freehold, and to extend the suffrage to male leaseholders and heads of households who paid taxes. In April 1830, the revised constitution was submitted to the people and ratified by a vote of 26,055 to 15,563. However, within the region that would contribute to West Virginia’s formation the vote was 1,383 for ratification and 8,365 against. Thomas L. Lees of New Jersey, president of Linsley Institute, in Wheeling, Virginia, succinctly summarized the nascent sectional fissures within the state when he wrote in 1831, “That part of Virginia which borders on the Ohio is rapidly improving in wealth and population; its inhabitants have long been dissatisfied with the selfish policy and the usurpations of the eastern slave holders, whose influence in the legislative body has ever been exerted in the perpetration of an oppressive aristocracy. The people here are very different from those of the eastern part of the state. Industry is much more encouraged and respected; slavery is unpopular, and the few who hold slaves generally treat them well. The time is not far distant when Western Virginia will either liberalize the present state government, or separate itself entirely from the Old Dominion.” “1830 Virginia Constitution,” Extracted From **Semi-Centennial History of West Virginia** (Charleston: Semi-Centennial Commission of West Virginia, 1913), 130-34, West Virginia Archives and History, West Virginia Division of Culture and History, [http://www.wvculture.org/HISTORY/government/182930cc.html](http://www.wvculture.org/HISTORY/government/182930cc.html), (accessed August 1, 2008), and Curtis, C. M. (2004, April) “The Re-Definition of Freehold Suffrage during Virginia's Constitutional Convention of 1829-1830,” Paper presented at the annual meeting of The Midwest Political Science Association, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, Illinois Online, [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p83912_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p83912_index.html), (accessed June 28, 2008). Disagreement over slavery and religion also impacted the county. As early as 1835, one writer cites the “discipline of the Methodist Church as being a powerful stimulus toward freeing the negro in this section.” See “Slavery,” FBLP, MS 76, BX 3, NBK 5, 48. The most popular denomination in the area in the mid-1800s was Methodist. Large Methodist congregations met in Barboursville and Guyandotte and, in the early 1840s, the growing national debate between pro-slavery and anti-slavery supporters within the Methodist Episcopal Church impacted the area. In 1844 at Louisville, Kentucky, a major division occurred in the national body of the Church over the question of slavery. In the resulting split, those churches with pro-slavery sympathies formed the Methodist Episcopal Church-South, remaining a separate polity until 1939, when it reunited with the Methodist Episcopal Church. Emblematic of the nation at large, the cultural differences created a schism in the local Methodist congregation, but with an interesting development: both congregations continued to use the same building, a church built in 1835 in the bend of Water Street in Guyandotte. The deep-seated yet intimate dual-congregation “remedy” of the county’s Methodists symbolized the growing divide of the county’s residents over the question of slavery. Geiger, **Civil War in Cabell County**, 5. J. A. Earl relays that some years later the two congregations built separate edifices. In 1858 the Methodist Episcopal church built a frame building which remains the oldest church building in this section of the state and probably the only Methodist Church in use in the State that has a slave gallery.” J. A. Earl, “Methodism in Guyandotte,” Box 20, Number 9, FBLP, #76, 38-9. Brief examination of Cabell County attorney and Confederate Captain James H. Ferguson, who won election to the House of Delegates in 1848 from Logan and Boone counties and who served in the Constitutional Convention of 1850-51, offers additional perspective. Although he never owned slaves and professed abolitionist leanings, Ferguson defended slavery and never sought to restrict its growth or to restrict the ability of slave owners to retrieve fugitive slaves from the North. Though he supported the Southern cause, Ferguson was an ardent Unionist, who was unabashed in his belief that his primary duty was ensure the primacy of the federal government. In a speech before the House of Delegates on February 18, 1850, Ferguson vociferously sided with those who had removed George W. Thompson from his office as District Attorney for “sympathizing with the Negroes in the


50 Eldridge, The Diaries of William F. Dusenberry, 42., 1856 entries. See also Slavery,” Box 3, Number 5, FBLP, #76, 4. Notably, Tom officiated at the funeral of his master, Martin Moore. See “Old Cemetery Deeds of Barboursville and Others near,” Box 19, Number 3, FBLP, #76, 43.

51 Eldridge, The Diaries of William F. Dusenbery, 1855 entries, 43.

52 Ibid., 1856 entries, 1, 7, 12, 14, 23, 27, 51.

53 Ibid., 1856 entries, 26.

54 Eldridge, Cabell County’s Empire for Freedom, 43. Eldridge relays that several of Cabell County early churches had a balcony for slaves. See “The Gwinn’s,” Box 7, Number 15, FBLP, #76, 16-17.

55 As John Blassingame importantly relays, “however oppressive or dehumanizing the plantation was, the struggle for survival was not severe enough to crush all of the slave’s creative instincts.” John W. Blassingame, The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 105.


57 The Western Courier (Charleston, VA), November 9, 1822, Box 15, Number 14, FBLP, #76, 34.

58 Nance relays that Captain William A. Jenkins, father of Confederate Brigadier General Albert G. Jenkins, “like other plantation owners in the Ohio Valley,” had a problem with runaway slaves. In 1827 Jenkins was sued by James Shelton, a local slave catcher and owner of a county plantation, for not paying him for the return of one slave. In 1848, another slave stealing dispute compelled Jenkins to once again appear before the court. Nance, The Significance of the Jenkins Plantation, 7, and Extracts from the Records of the County Court of Cabell County, West Virginia, From January 2, 1809 to July 6, 1863, Minute Book No. V, 235.

59 Eldridge, The Diaries of William F. Dusenberry, 16, 17. See also Eldridge, Cabell County’s Empire for Freedom, 43.

60 Extracts from the Records of the County Court of Cabell County, West Virginia, From January 2, 1809 to July 6, 1863, Minute Book No. 6, 184.

61 Eldridge, The Diaries of William F. Dusenberry, 61, 1855 entries.

64 Notably, recent works have served as a corrective to the historical over-emphasis stressing white participation in the railroad. Instead, they have illuminated the centrality of “front-line” African American bravery, contribution and sacrifice in its continued viability and success within the Ohio River Valley. See Ann Hagedorn, _Beyond the River: The Untold Story of Heroes of the Underground Railroad_ (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002), J. Blaine Hudson, _Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in the Kentucky Borderland_ (Jefferson, North Carolina & London: McFarland Company, Inc., Publishers, 2002), and Keith Griffler, _Front Line of Freedom_. Fergus M. Bordewich states, “For generations, Americans thought of the Underground Railroad as a mostly monochromatic narrative of high-minded white people condescending to assist terrified and helpless blacks.” Fergus M. Bordewich, _Bound for Canaan: The Underground Railroad and the War for the Soul of America_ (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc, 2006), 4. In her study of antebellum Cincinnati, Nikki Taylor shifts focus from individual involvement to black community activism in the Underground Railroad. Nikki M. Taylor, _Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati’s Black Community, 1802-1868_ (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 138-160. Philip J. Schwarz comments, “The Underground Railroad was less organized than once thought, but one of its most prominent characteristics was that so many of the ad hoc and regular ‘conductors’ were African Americans.” Philip J. Schwarz, _Migrants against Slavery: Virginians and the Nation_ (Charlottesville & London: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 36. Discussing the difference between Underground Railroad authority Wilbur Siebert’s influential work _The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom_ (published in 1898) and subsequent revisions and additions, one scholar relays, “Interesting, while Siebert’s book tended to emphasize the role of whites in assisting fugitives, the role of African Americans looms much larger in the Siebert papers.” Hudson, _Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in the Kentucky Borderland_, 10. Siebert contacted hundreds of individuals thought connected to or involved in the Underground Railroad. A great many of the letters and related documents were published in his seminal study. See Wilbur H. Siebert, _The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom_.


payment to bounty hunters for the capture of runaways. Thus the law served as a corruptive force, for it provided not only protection for the bounty hunter, but financial incentive as well, ensuring their impunity before state law. Not only was testimony by the accused slave disallowed, there was no right to trial by jury. The most outrageous provision to many Northerners, not only abolitionists, granted federally appointed commissioners the authority to compel any bystander, no matter their beliefs, to help seize any alleged runaway. Addressing the impact of the law upon his efforts to help his people passing through Ripley, Ohio, the remarkable John P. Parker wrote, “After the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in [1850] we had to be more secretive than ever, for it meant confiscation of property, a fine and [a] jail sentence.” John P. Parker, *His Promised Land: The Autobiography of John P. Parker, Former Slave and Conductor on the Underground Railroad*, ed. Stuart Seely Sprague (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1996), 84. Born a slave in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1827, Parker eventually purchased his own freedom and in 1850 relocated to Ripley, Ohio, where he married Miranda Boulden. His exploits as an abolitionist and conductor resulted in the freedom of hundreds of runaways. He also achieved notable success as a businessman, inventor, and industrialist. Although he largely worked independently of white Presbyterian minister and abolitionist John Rankin in Ripley, the pair helped make the town an abolitionist center and important waystation on the Underground Railroad. For more on Rankin, see Hagedorn, *Beyond the River: The Untold Story of Heroes of the Underground Railroad* and Hudson, *Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in the Kentucky Borderlands*, 11, 24, 152-153.

In the quest to recapture their property, owners placed fugitive slave notices in local papers, further illustrating the dangers faced by the runaway. In the border county of Scioto, home to the hamlet of Portsmouth, Ohio, the first fugitive slave notice appeared in the *Scioto Telegraph* in 1820. Over the next thirty-five years, a total of thirteen separate advertisements appeared in the paper, with the last notice published in 1855. Nelson W. Evans, *A History of Scioto County Together with a Pioneer Record of Southern Ohio* (Portsmouth, Ohio: Nelson W. Evans, 1903), 612, Local History Collection, Portsmouth Public Library, Portsmouth, Ohio. Many whites were more than willing to assist hunters and garner the rewards, with Portsmouth an especially historically strong pro-slavery center. Addressing the nature of race relations in southern Ohio during the antebellum period, William W. Griffin relays, “The nearness of many southern Ohio counties to slave states reinforced and perpetuated southern Ohio’s custom of strictly enforcing the color line. Cross-river economic and social relations fostered a common culture in the Ohio Valley that was much influenced by the South’s way of life, for example, regarding the roles of free blacks.” William W. Griffin, *African Americans and the Color Line in Ohio, 1915-1930* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2005), 49.


For example, the *Kanawha Valley Star* pronounced that the goals of Thayer and his associates were “diametrically opposed to the cherished institutions” of Virginia. See *Kanawha Valley Star* (Charleston, Virginia), June 30, 1857, quoted in Otis K. Rice, “Eli Thayer and the Friendly Invasion of Virginia,” *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Nov., 1971), 585. In contrast, the Ashland, Kentucky, *American Union* extended “a brother’s hand and brother’s welcome” to those [abolitionists] intending to migrate from the North. See *American Union* (Ashland, Kentucky), May 28, 1857, also quoted in Rice, “Eli Thayer and the Friendly Invasion of Virginia,” 585-586. On at least one occasion, locals took matters into their own hands. In August 1857, prominent Cabell County slaveholder and future Confederate general Albert Gallatin Jenkins, visited the Ceredo site. Like Thayer, Jenkins had recently won a congressional seat, but as a Democrat. After greeting him politely, Thayer recalled that Jenkins responded by being “a surly, sour and malevolent spectator.” The next day, two Negroes, “posing as runaway slaves en route to Canada, besought assistance from the ‘Neighbors,’ but they were told that an attempted escape would bring hardships upon their own people and were advised to return home.” Thayer believed that the incident constituted a deliberate attempt by Jenkins and others to catch Thayer violating Virginia statutes and bring down the wrath of the community and state upon the group. *Eli Thayer Founder of Ceredo, W.Va.* (n.p.:n.d), Ceredo Historical Society Museum, Ceredo, WV, 10. In truth, Thayer’s primary goal was to establish colonies of free laborers in the slave states. Thus,

Wallace, Cabell County Annals and Families, 43. Talbott relays that a net decline of Negro population of over ten percent occurred during the decade of 1850 to 1860, as compared to a twenty-five percent increase in the white population for the area that now West Virginia. “Most of this decline was in the number of slaves, due both to the removal of slaves to the East, and their sale to cotton states, but also to the escape of fugitive slaves or their emancipation and removal to free states. Evidence of the lost by escape, or removal from the border to prevent it, is in fact that the sharpest decline during this decade occurred in counties near the Ohio River and the Mason and Dixon Line.” Forrest Talbott, “Some Legislative and Legal Aspects of the Negro Question in West Virginia During the Civil War and Reconstruction, Part I,” West Virginia History, Vol. XXIV, no. 1 (October 1962), 9.

Wilbur Siebert, “Interview with Asbury Parker of Ironton, Ohio, September 30, 1894,” The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom (Columbus, Ohio: Long’s College Book Company, 1951), 56.

“Carry Me Back,” Huntington Advertiser, March 4, 1875.

“Slavery,” Box 3, Number 5, FBLP, #76, 5. Also see “Memoirs of Sampson Sanders Family,” 77.

Nance, The Significance of the Jenkins Plantation, 7, and Bickley, “Black People and the Huntington Experience,” 130. Former Barboursville resident, Ida Berkley relays that after the war, Morris returned to the county with “the slaves” in tow. Individual slaves recalled by Berkley include: Ben and his wife, Mahala; Aunt ‘Manda, “who always baked the corn bread for father,” and Malinda (Anderson) E. Goode

“The Gwinn’s,” Box 7, Number 15, FBLP, #76, 18-19.

Ibid., 4, and “Old Cemetery Deeds of Barboursville,” Box 19, Number 3, FBLP, #76, 42.

“Aunt Em’ dies After Stoke, Saw Family ‘Sold Down River.’” Huntington Herald Dispatch, April 26, 1945

For instance, Mrs. Walter Mitchell relays, “Prior to the Civil War the number of slaves had been decreasing in this section, and with the close of the Civil War that chapter in the neighborhood’s history closed. A few devoted servants remained with their master as long as they lived. With few exceptions the masters were faithful and kindly protectors of their wards; and for the most part the slaves looked upon their owners as their truest friends and only refuge both during and after slavery days.” Mrs. Walter Mitchell, “History of Cabell Creek Community,” Farm Bureau County Life Conference, June 1925, comp., Mrs. Lewis E. Caldwell, KYOWVA Genealogical Society, Huntington, West Virginia. J.W. Miller states, “I cannot close this history without saying something about our old time colored people. In making this state we took from Virginia more than half her territory, but we only inherited four per cent of the slaves. I never witnessed any of the cruelties Harriet Beecher Stowe tells us about in Uncle Tom’s Cabin. The slaves were respected and honored by all regardless of the station they occupied in life. They received their freedom with full honor; they helped to carve this country out of a wilderness and no man can say aught against them.” J. W. Miller, “History of Barboursville Community, Cabell County,” Morgantown, West Virginia, Agricultural Extension Division, 1925, West Virginia Archives and History, West Virginia Division of Culture and History, http://www.wvculture.org/history/agrext/barbours.html, (accessed on July 17, 2008).


Taylor, “Making West Virginia a Free State,” 145.

In contrast, in 1860 Kanawha County resided 2,184 slaves, down from the county’s 1850 historical peak of 3, 140 when the county’s salt industry flourished. See John Edmund Stealey, III,

84 Mud Bridge district held the county’s third largest number, at nine slaveholders and 29 slaves, an average of 3.2 slaves per household. An average of 2 slaves per household existed in the district of Thornyke, location of the county’s fourth largest population of holders and slaves, with eight holders and sixteen slaves, respectively. The remaining districts possessed only a smattering of owners and slaves. Green Bottom and Falls Mills each possessed two slaveholders, overseeing six and two slaves, respectively. Only one slaveholder resided in each of the districts of Hamlin, Ten Mile, and Paw Paw Bottom. Both Phillip Powell and Wm McComas held three slaves, while Archibald Reynolds held five. *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860, Virginia Slave Schedule*, Vol.1 (Washington, D.C.: The National Archives, 1967).


86 Nance, 7.

87 *1860 Virginia Slave Schedule*, Cabell County.


89 Nance, 7.

90 Crandall Shifflett contends that although horses were better suited for post-1830 farm machinery, oxen were more valuable than horses because they were less expensive, more powerful, more tractable, did better in the heat, weighed more, and ate less. See Crandall A. Shifflett, *Patronage and Poverty in the Tobacco South: Louisa County, Virginia, 1860-1900* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982), 24-26.

91 Nance, 8-9.


93 On December 6, 1858, Edmund and Lilla returned to the court to have their status as free persons of color confirmed. They were joined by Samuel Wallace. Former Samuel Sanders’s slave, Isom Sanders, was granted the same privilege a year later. *Extracts from the Records of the County Court of Cabell County, West Virginia, From January 2, 1809 to July 6, 1863*, Minute Book No. 5, 149, and Minute Book No. 6, 151, 192.

94 Eldridge, *Cabell County’s Empire for Freedom*, xiii, xiv, 44.

95 Several possible reasons could explain this: the associated relationship between old age and the acquisition of sufficient assets through years of sustained labor needed to purchase one’s freedom; the associated relationship between longer service and greater intimacy within the slave/master relationship, thus engendering sufficient interpersonal capital to receive manumission; the associated relationship between older age and degenerating health, thus allowing the master to reduce capital overhead and free the slave without great financial loss; and lastly, the increasingly harsh political conditions newly free blacks had to live under.

96 Geiger relays, “The business section of Guyandotte was completely gutted, purportedly to prevent the Confederates from returning for supplies. The Buffington Mill was burned, as was the Forest Hotel. Even churches were not immune from the torch. The Guyandotte Baptist Church was burned after two unsuccessful attempts when Union soldiers tore off the shutters and stuffed them with straw before setting them alight in the church belfry. The Guyandotte Methodist Episcopal Church, South may also have been burned. Many houses were set ablaze, with special attention given to the town’s most prominent secessionists. Women and children were forced into the streets, and some of the residents reportedly had to leap out of windows to escape the flames. Union reports later declared that no homes belonging to Union supporters were torched. One eyewitness, however, claimed that the first home to be burned belonged to a Union man, as were the majority of the residences consumed by fire.” See Geiger, “The Tragic Fate of Guyandotte,” 36.

71
Indeed, Rasmussen cites scholarship by Daniel Crofts and John C. Inscoe, both of whom contend that western Virginians failed to yield to their racial insecurities. In the 1860 presidential election many western Virginians “voted for southern fire-brand John C. Breckinridge over Abraham Lincoln or Stephen Douglass, either of whom would have been far more likely to gratify the West’s need for internal improvements.” See Rasmussen, “Charles Ambler’s Sectionalism in Virginia: An Appreciation,” 16. See also Daniel W. Crofts, Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 83, and John C. Inscoe, Mountain Masters: Slavery and the Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1996), 110.


Hudson, Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in the Ohio Borderland, 51.

Departure by free blacks and relocation of slaves by their owners also help explain the drop. Talbott, “Some Legislative and Legal Aspects of the Negro Question in West Virginia,” 9.


Fanny Cooper, “History of Lower Creek Community; Cabell County, W.Va.,” Morgantown, West Virginia: Agricultural Extension Division, 1925, 1, Thornton Tayloe Perry, II Collection, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

Ibid., 24.


Talbott, 15.

As Willie Lee Rose contends, the collision between the planters’ and ex-slaves’ interests angered the planter, who still sought unencumbered control of land and labor. “Many mistakes made between 1865 and 1869 were owing to psychological defensiveness of a displaced elite whose world-view was shaken not only by their conquerors but also by their erstwhile slaves.” Willie Lee Rose, “Masters Without Slaves,” Slavery and Freedom, ed. William W. Freehling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 89.

The Union Register (Monroe County), November 9, 1867.


Proposed in 1870 by former Union soldier, W. H. H. Flick, a member of the legislature of Pendleton County, the constitutional amendment grated suffrage to adult males and was ratified the following year. See Phil Conley, West Virginia: A Brief History of the Mountain State (Charleston, WV: The Charleston Printing Co., 1940) 86-7.


Slaveholder F. D Beuhring freed all of his slaves after the war. See “Beuhring Family History,” Box 20, Number 9, FBLP, #67, 75.

Ken Sullivan and Randy Lawrence, “Black Migration to Southern West Virginia, 1870-1930,” Goldenseal, (Winter 1997), 52. By way of comparison, Talbott relays that the state’s black population declined 13.5 percent during the decade of the War, “as against another twenty-five percent growth in the number of whites” entering the state during the same period. See Talbott, 9.


Talbott, 8-9.
Eldridge provides perspective on this development when she states, “Many of the slaves had been born and raised in Cabell County; leaving their home would have been very difficult. Everything familiar, from their favorite berry patch or fishing hole to the church down the lane, was being left behind for something called freedom. Apprehension for the unknown future had to concern all the adults.” Eldridge, *Cabell County’s Empire for Freedom*, 46.

121 Nance, 10. See also “Fifes, Swicks, Coopers, Jordans, The Caldwells, The Schlaegels,” Box 3, Number 17, FBLP, #76, 37.

To this point, Shed and Charley, the only slaves not “implicated in the ‘run-away’” initiated by Fred, and thus not sold away, remained “at home” after the war. At least in part, a rational for Charley may have been his relationship with the housemaid of Mrs. Rolfe, who he married shortly after the war, and who bore him several children. See Box 9, Number 9, FBLP, #76, 77.

As Dunaway observes, “Even in counties with the smallest slave populations (including those in Kentucky and West Virginia), slaveholders owned a disproportionate share of the wealth and land, held a majority of important state and county offices, and championed proslavery agendas rather than the social and economic interests of nonslaveholders in their own communities. Moreover, public policies were designed by state legislatures controlled and manipulated by slaveholders from outside the Appalachian region. In addition, every Appalachian county and every citizen benefited in certain ways and/or was damaged by the regional slavery system, even when there were few slaves in the county and even when the individual citizen owned no slaves.” Dunaway, *Slavery in the American Mountain South*, 241.

Chapter 2: Post-Emancipation
Black Community and Early Black Migrant Influx, 1865-1871.
What made Negro suffrage in the South acceptable to the North by 1867 was not a profound belief in the black man’s capacity for intelligent citizenship but the political necessities of restricting the Union under Northern or Republican hegemony.¹

In the quest to absorb the full measure of freedom, black agency throughout the South and West Virginia impacted white actions and attitudes in the immediate post-Civil War years. But, it was a gradual process. The severing of Virginia divided many groups in West Virginia. Grievances born of secession inflamed questions of taxation, political representation, and constitutional change greatly complicated black aspirations. It must be remembered that the black population in 1860 found in the Virginia counties comprising the current state of West Virginia totaled only approximately 21,000, most found in the eastern part of the state. In contrast, the white population totaled 355,526.² Moreover, long standing attitudes on race and slavery held great sway throughout Appalachia. As one authority notes, “southern mountaineers were first and foremost southerners and that they viewed slavery and race not unlike those of their yeoman or even slaveholding counterparts elsewhere in the South.”³ Consequently, every gain achieved by freedmen and women after the Civil War resulted in a loss of white stature and authority, a difficult prospect for many trapped in the past.⁴

This chapter briefly studies the immediate post-bellum transition of the region’s African American population linked to the formation of West Virginia and the end of the Civil War: first, through a short assessment of the factors and attendant to Huntington’s founding and second, through analysis of the economic, informing black migration into the region and county during the transitional years.
demographic and political status of 1870 Cabell County’s residential African American population,

Visionary railroad magnate and itinerant migrant Collis P. Huntington arrived to Guyandotte early in 1869. There is no record that he spent much if any time among Cabell County’s black residents during his sojourn. Brilliant, obstinate, and indefatigable, the six-foot four-inch former “peddler and storeowner” was a man unlike any other to visit the area. From humble beginnings he had built a fortune through his association with Leland Stanford’s Central Pacific transcontinental railroad endeavor. Now, far away from his California roots, Huntington was scheduled to survey personally the largely uninhabited southern shore of the Ohio River over the course of several days. His quest: to find the perfect site for the western terminus of his recently acquired railroad, the Chesapeake and Ohio, for which he had paid a purported $850,000. Only after a great deal of comprehensive, persuasive, and in some cases, forceful legal maneuvers and financial negotiations did Huntington acquire control of the C & O. Availing himself of his contacts, expertise, and stature, and aware of the vast potential wealth to be made, Huntington sought and gained financial backing from both sides of the Atlantic in his quest. As one historian relays, “Huntington was accustomed to buying legislators, inspectors, even U.S. congressmen to get what he wanted. Only Virginia’s western mountain stood in the way.” One biographer, more pointed in his commentary, referred to Huntington as “A hard and cheery old man with no more soul than a shark.”
Interestingly, as early as 1867, Huntington’s associates sought financial backing from Cabell County officials. That year, the county residents voted on a proposal to subscribe $150,000 worth of stock in the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company. One of the conditions stipulated by West Virginia counties west of Kanawha Falls was that the amount of their investment be spent on their end of the line. 9 To facilitate matters, at a time when the state constitution “denied the right to vote to persons who had participated in the rebellion,” former Confederate soldiers who owned property were permitted to vote on the proposal. 10 One likely voter was Cabell County attorney and former Confederate captain, James H. Ferguson. Correspondence from Edmund Fontaine, then president of the C & O, to John Cunningham, the railroad’s West Virginia agent, indicate ongoing frustration at the slow pace of subscription sales to West Virginia counties. 11 As late as September 9, 1868, Wayne County was the only county within West Virginia to sign a subscription out of the projected counties through which the railroad would pass. 12 On September 29, 1868, Fontaine directed Cunningham to “procure the actual subscription of the County of Cabell from Col. Ferguson the agent.” Less than two weeks later, Fontaine reiterated that he had “written again” to Col. Ferguson for his assistance in procuring a subscription from the county. Only the intercession of the law makers of the states of West Virginia and Virginia, who continued to favor the aspirations of the C & O with “auxiliary legislation for more than two years,” helped to provide the capital, exemptions, and privileges needed for the railroad to begin. 13
After spending weeks scouting several sites on the Kanawha and Guyandotte rivers for his transshipment beachhead, Huntington settled on four miles of river frontage west of the Guyandotte River and the town of Guyandotte. Here, he decided, would be the western terminus of his railroad, linking Richmond, Virginia, to the Ohio River, a dream dating back to men like George Washington, who as a surveyor saw the potential of the C & O Canal connecting the Virginia tidewater ports with the Ohio Valley. Like Washington, Huntington envisioned America’s future in western expansion, with him at the corporate helm of his trans-continental railroad. The future West Virginia town figured mightily in his plans: its close proximity to timber, coal fields, iron mines, oil, and natural gas, furnished advantages as a manufacturing center. Additionally, and of great import, it offered favorable opportunities for connections with steamboat lines to Cincinnati.

Thus, through the auspices of his Central Land Company, Huntington purchased some five thousand acres of property, including sufficient ground for the uses of the railroad, rights of way, extensive machine and car shops, engine houses, depots, and accessory buildings for various purposes, and land on the north side of the Ohio for the site of a planned future bridge. On February 27, 1871, the town of Huntington, West Virginia, was incorporated. The U. S. Post Office officially recognized the new town the following May. After clearing off four miles of river-front property, crews began construction of “a round-house, a brass and iron foundry, a blacksmith and boiler shop, a shop to build passenger
cars, a large building to manufacture and repair freight cars, and a drying house for lumber.”

Against the backdrop of post-war socio-political, cultural, and economic transition, black migrants arrived into the region, Cabell County, and Huntington. Migration, by its very nature, frequently left migrants exposed and vulnerable. As the state with the highest average elevation of any state east of the Mississippi River, navigation through West Virginia was difficult, with the New River Valley especially hazardous terrain. On his journey west, Booker T. Washington noted, “One of the most hazardous parts of the journey was crossing the New River gorge, descending from the spectacular towering cliffs on one side, crossing a shallow mountain river, then up again by another winding narrow road to the top of the cliffs on the other side.” Washington further reflected on the arduous nature of such ventures:

All of our household and other goods were packed into a wagon drawn by two horses or mules. I cannot recall how many days it took us to make this trip, but it seems to me, as I recall it now, that we were at least ten days. Of course, we had to sleep in the wagon, or what was more often true, on the ground. The children walked a good portion of the distance.

One night we camped near an abandoned log cabin, and my mother decided that, instead of cooking our frugal meal in the open air, as she had been accustomed to do on the trip, she would build a fire in this cabin and we should both cook and eat in it during the night. When we had gotten the fire well started, to the consternation of all of us, a large and frightful looking snake came down the chimney. This, of course, did away with the idea of our sheltering ourselves in the cabin for the night, and we slept out in the open air, as we had done on previous occasions.
Even after completing the journey, some experienced the harsh reality of racism. Remarkling on his experiences, African American John Williams Matheus relays, “But after the surrender some of the people in Ohio were not so good to the colored people. The old folks told me they were stoned when they came across the river to Ohio after the surrender and that the colored people were treated like cats and dogs.”

Common features of early black migration included: 1) the initial exploratory trip performed solo by a young black male on foot or horseback; 2) evaluation, sometimes over extended periods of time, of prospective locale; 3) a return trip to retrieve family and/or friends, or the relaying of word through a third party for them to come; 4) preparation for the move; and finally, 5) migration. Extended periods of isolation or separation compelled mindfulness of one’s place, geographically and socially. In his study on black migration to McDowell County, West Virginia, Howard P. Wade relays, “Since strange blacks were suspect once they left the community in which they were known, it was a dangerous undertaking.”

In truth, once one crossed over the Appalachian Mountains, farms and small towns dotted the region, forming an almost continuous link into the Kanawha and Ohio Valleys. Surely, a number of black migrants were able to take advantage of the formal and informal informational network provided by freedmen and freedwomen. Although the specifics of the migrant experience might have differed, the general conditions of the aggregate did not. Black agency (as well as social interactions between blacks and whites) in post-bellum Cabell County, like
the South, was constrained for years by paternalistic attitudes. In fact, many whites never adapted to the changes emancipation wrought. Certainly, this was true in Cabell County, West Virginia, as it was throughout the shattered South. And, given the lingering Confederate sympathies permeating a significant proportion of the county’s, and region’s white population, black migrants challenged the historical status quo in their quest to build lives. With their worldly possessions tightly secured, tens of thousands, many composite families, embarked, in wagon and on foot, to distant destinations, frequently outside of their native state. Recalling conversations with the descendants of early Huntington’s black migrants, local black historian Edna Duckworth recalls that many times she heard, “My family came over the Blue Ridge in a wagon. I heard it so often until I wondered, was it a wagon train?”

The vast majority of black migrants engaged in purposeful, frequently informed, journeys, yet many newly freed blacks, lacking a clear destination or perceived to lack one, were seen as threats to civil society. Frequently, whites conflated unstructured and seemingly recreational movement of the newly emancipated with aimlessness. Carter G. Woodson challenged the portrayal of newly emancipated black men as wayward, hedonistic, and corruptible, as well as the rationale behind it. In the aftermath of the demise of the “peculiar institution,” unfettered travel and joyful expression, he argued, was merely the natural expression of emancipation by the Negro “to put his freedom to a test.” Thus, it is understandable that for a time, the profundity and intensity of liberation was interpreted by black people “not only as freedom from slavery but freedom from
responsibility.” Any understanding of the county’s (and Huntington’s) nascent black migrant population lies in examining the means and ways William, and the others above, adapted to their new freedom. Perhaps, Charles S. Johnson summarized it best: “After all, it means more that the Negroes who left the South were motivated more by the desire to improve their economic status than by fear of being manhandled by unfriendly whites. The one is a symptom of wholesome and substantial life purpose; the other, the symptom of a fugitive incourageous opportunism.”

What is clear is that on the heels of the Civil War and Emancipation, blacks and whites, for reasons both linked and separate departed Virginia (and West Virginia). Emancipation precipitated significant change throughout Cabell County. After the war, the county’s total population had declined from 8,020 in 1860 to 6,429 in 1870. Yet due to increasing land values associated with the established territory, and because the county had remained largely untouched by the War, the value of its 160,500 acres had only fallen slightly; from 1.68 million dollars in 1860 to 1.55 million in 1870, a negligible drop compared to the discussed Virginia counties.

Yet, the value of personal assets per white household in the district of Guyandotte dipped from $1192 to $503, a fact partially attributable to the damage inflicted to the town during the war, white migration, and the loss of the town’s 101 slaves: a loss that mirrored the dramatic drop in the county’s black residential population, from 329 in 1860, including 24 free blacks, to 123 by 1870. Interestingly, tobacco production nearly doubled during the decade as more
people, eyeing increased profits, shifted to the crop away from corn and wheat.\textsuperscript{30} In truth, in 1870 Cabell County’s economic foundation was firmly entrenched in agriculture.\textsuperscript{31}

In spring of 1871, just months after the incorporation of Huntington, West Virginia, a group of black migrants arrived into the village. Like so many before them, this group had traveled the James River and Kanawha Turnpike to traverse the Appalachia Mountains before arriving at their destination. They were led by thirty-one-year-old itinerant preacher Nelson Barnett, who, after spending some time preaching at churches throughout the Ohio Valley, acquired a job on an upstart railroad, and then walked back to his homeland in Buckingham County, Virginia. There, he spread the word to friends and family of “honest work to be had” on the railroad. Soon, he explained, Huntington would be a key station of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, and jobs and other blacks would surely follow.\textsuperscript{32}

Although the primacy of economic opportunity is clearly stated as a “pull” factor for black migration to Huntington, some discussion on the possible “push” factors is warranted. In 1870, Buckingham County contained 6,411 black residents, a drop of 2,400 over the preceding decade, a fact that impacted yeoman and planter alike.\textsuperscript{33} Yale economist Gerald David Jaynes provides context for the financial blow experienced by the county’s slave holders in his contention that southern slave owners lost almost half of their capital, not just their labor, as a result of the war.\textsuperscript{34} Deprived of their enslaved workers who, through the sweat of their daily labor, primed, topped, and sorted more than 4.75 million pounds of tobacco in 1860, the county’s tobacco production collapsed to a mere 890
thousand pounds in 1870, a total lower than each of its neighboring counties save for Appomattox. The assessed value of the county’s real estate also fell precipitously to 1.85 million dollars, nearly half its 1860 total, a development mirrored throughout the South. As one authority notes, “The value of land in Buckingham, which had increased by approximately 15% from 1850-1860 plunged to levels below the 1820 values after the war.”

Further perspective on the difficult transition endured by members of the Buckingham County gentry (and by extension, its black residents) into the New South political economy is obtained from reviewing the experiences of planter Edward T. Page. The former University of Virginia student and son of John Cary Page, one of the largest property owners in the county, and holder of more African American slaves than all but a few of his neighbors, was the product of a well-off Virginia family. After the Civil War, during which he led the Fourteenth Virginia Confederate Regiment, the heir returned home after Appomattox and, as notification to all that he wished to remain a Virginia gentleman, changed the name of his plantation from Half-Way Branch to Caryswood. Yet, he could no longer remain a man of leisure. In short order, he set out to rebuild his life, and, after persuading his former slaves to remain after informing them of their emancipation, employed fifteen of them in 1867 and twenty-seven in 1868. However, he soon found he was unsuited for his new role as patron in the post-war political economy. Through patronage, whites throughout the South attempted to reassert and reconfigure their natural claim of superiority over African Americans in the new wage labor environment. Patrons were more than
just employers, though, for they controlled capital, production, and distribution in a social and political environment they also controlled.\textsuperscript{36} For a combination of reasons, including bad business decisions and practices (for example, selling large quantities of alcohol to his workers and granting workers credit for work not yet performed), Page’s enterprise grew increasingly debt-ridden. In short order, Page soon found himself working alongside the black workers he had hired, an ignominious fall that certainly went beyond mere economic considerations. In 1860, Page had declared his personal property amounted to $30,000, while his father’s estate, which included forty-seven slaves, had a value over $65,000. In 1870, Page notified the census taker that his personal wealth amounted to just $1,000.\textsuperscript{37} By the early 1870s Page was mortgaging his crops to cover his expenses. In 1873 he declared bankruptcy, “listing all his assets on one sheet of paper.”\textsuperscript{38}

Page’s travails help illuminate the uphill battle that faced significant numbers of African Americans who remained in Buckingham County (and by extension, elsewhere throughout the south). Discussing the county’s economic demise, the U.S. Bureau of the Census relays, “The agricultural depression, low prices, and the scarcity of skilled labor have discouraged farmers. Too much poor land is put in tobacco, and there is too much disposition to rely upon commercial fertilizers, to the neglect of yard and stable manures. Tenants, the majority of who are negroes, raise, as a rule, an inferior grade, which is forced into the market through local dealers in an unfit condition.”\textsuperscript{39} Addressing the economic realities of Buckingham County African Americans, Dianne Swann-Wright states, “the
reality of freedom challenged the notion that the bottom rail could ever be on the top. In this community, economic realities and necessities made for unmet needs and unobtainable wishes in many instances.” Thus, the logical choice for many of Buckingham County’s freedmen and women was migration.

Given Nelson Barnett’s calling, native intelligence, and persuasive powers, it is easy to imagine his group seeking guidance and counsel through prayer before making their decision. Eventually, James Henry Woodson, Barnett’s brother-in-law agreed to join him. Other able-bodied men joined in, and eventually after packing their belongings and as many people as they could onto Woodson’s horse drawn wagon, the “family” began the journey west from the farmlands of New Canton, Virginia. Six years after the end of the Civil War and eight years after West Virginia obtained statehood, the assembly, composed of Barnett, his twenty-five-year-old wife, the former Betty Woodson, and their children Carter, age five, McClinton, age five, and, George, age one, James Henry Woodson, and family friend Anderson Radford (and perhaps others), arrived into the town. There, they, like thousands of other black migrants in immediate post-bellum America, built a life. In their efforts, they were unremarkable, merely participants in the long-standing historical process of movement and migration. Yet, in no small way, they were pioneers, perhaps even heroes.

A few months before the end of the Civil War, James Woodson was a slave in Fluvanna County, Virginia, when he learned that Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Woodson fled his master, and later came under the protection of Union soldiers, he assisted in raids upon Confederate soldiers
and storage facilities. After the war, Woodson returned to Fluvanna County, and shortly thereafter, married former slave Anne Eliza Riddle of New Canton, Buckingham County, Virginia. (During the war, Riddle had watched over her mother and siblings, and through her efforts ensured the family remained intact and safe during the transition from slave to freedpeople). The couple moved to New Canton, and eventually became the parents of nine children, the youngest of whom was Carter G. Woodson.42

After her marriage to James Woodson in 1869, the couple and relatives moved west across the Appalachians where the men hoped to gain employment with the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad or in the coal mines. Woodson acquired work at a railroad construction site on the western section of the railroad close to where Huntington would eventually rise. In 1870, the family moved back to Buckingham County where they would reside before deciding to migrate to Huntington in 1871.43 Surely, the travails and successes of the past informed, guided, and fortified their efforts as they traveled west to the dusty hamlet located on the Ohio River.

During the state’s formative years African Americans confronted post-emancipation Appalachia white paternalism, stereotypes, and racism which propelled negative perceptions and attitudes of black capability and progress. As Appalachian James C. Klotter notes, “Blacks in slavery and freedom were often stereotyped by whites as a lazy but wily people who believed in spirits and witches, as an immoral race in which illegitimacy was not uncommon, as an inferior class that seemed to cower in subordination when talking with whites, and
—paradoxically—as a violent, savage people who needed ‘civilization’ and religion’s guiding hand.”

Despite the impediments, political agitation, while muted, was one method the state’s early black residents addressed the complexity of the new era. Stephen D. Engle states, “politics became the chief instrument by which freedom could be realized, since it served to bring local mandates in line with national legislation.” In the fall of 1870, black men voted for the first time in Cabell County, when fourteen, comprising 26 percent of the total black voting population, cast their ballots in the state election of 1870. On October 22, 1870, William F. Dusenberry noted black voter excitement in his diary, “Election today. Much excitement on account of niggers voting. About ½ dozen voted here.”

That year, only a small and dispersed black residential population resided in the county. A few still possessed the surnames of prominent Cabell County white, families; i.e. Black, Kilgore, Jenkins, and, most prominently, Morris. Scattered throughout the county’s five districts of Barboursville, Guyandotte, Union, Grant, and McComas were seventy black adult females and fifty-three adult males, including twenty-five mulattoes (20% of the population), and sixty-six children under the age of eighteen (see Map 4). The 123 African American pioneers residing within the county represented 1.9 percent of the general population. Fifty-eight were West Virginia natives, forty Virginian, six hailed from North Carolina, three cited Ohio as home, two were from Kentucky, and one person each cited Tennessee, South Carolina and Louisiana as their birth state.
Unfortunately, the 1870 federal census fails to cite familial or household relationship.  

Examination of the black residential population within the various districts provides insight into the economic status of early black settlers in the county. In 1870, the district of Barboursville, home of the county seat and the most affluent white district, encompassed territory that abutted the other four, and stretched from the Cabell-Wayne county line in the west to the Union district line in the east. Combined black wealth, comprising real estate and personal assets and excluding income, totaled $415. No black owned real estate, and personal assets averaged $46 per black household. Average white household real estate value in Barboursville was $2439; personal assets averaged $610 per household. Average white household size was 5.7 persons while average black household size was five, with the households of Benjamin and Mandalay Morris, and Patsey Dean with seven individuals each, comprising the largest. The district included forty-five non-whites in 1870, twenty-three blacks and twenty-two mulattoes, out of a total population of 1,228. (Within the town of Barboursville resided fourteen blacks and 371 whites). Nine African American households are listed, including two sets of Morrices, the only familial (along with the George Morris household in McComas) relationship listed in the 1870 census. Eighty-five-year-old Virginia born farm worker Samuel Morris possessed a personal estate valued at two hundred dollars. His household included Louisa, a twenty-eight-year-old housekeeper, Ester, thirty; and Henry, twenty-two, the only West Virginian. Not far away lived his mulatto sister, Eliza Morris, a sixteen-year-old live-in domestic
Map 2.1 Five Districts of Cabell County, 1870.
servant. The thirty-two-year-old West Virginian Benjamin, a farm-worker, headed the other Morris household with Mahala, his wife, a housekeeper and state native. Together, the two had a personal estate listed at one hundred forty dollars, two daughters, Ann and Mary, aged eight and two, respectively, and sons, Moses, Charles, and William, aged six, four, and three months.50

Located at the junction of the Ohio and Guyandotte rivers south of Greenbottom, the district of Guyandotte encompassed the oldest part of Cabell County and contained its second most affluent population. Out of a population of 2,095, it, not surprisingly, also housed the largest number of non-whites within the county—thirty blacks and twenty-four mulattoes. Here resided the county’s most affluent black residential population. Combined black wealth totaled $1128 with blacks possessing $645 in real estate and personal wealth and the mulatto population holding $483. Interestingly, $375 of real estate (inheritance?) was owned by sixteen-year old farm-worker and student Richard David.51 All six of the black children attending school in the county were from Guyandotte.52

Total real estate holdings for the 365 white households in Guyandotte totaled nearly $817,000 and over $183,400 in personal assets. White household average real estate holding was $2,238; personal assets averaged $503 per household, totals slightly below those of Barboursville’s white population. Nine black households, the same number as in Barboursville, resided within the district. However, the size of non-white households was greater than those found in the remaining districts. The average household size in Guyandotte was six (compared to 6.2 persons per white household). Six of the nine black households in
Guyandotte consisted of five individuals. Three held more than six persons, including that of Virginia born John and Luella Shaver, aged twenty-six and twenty-four, their nine-month-old daughter Mary W., David, and Olive, aged twenty-three and eighteen, and Eurgine, a one-year-old girl. Two households held more than eight persons, the largest non-white households in the county, including that of Elijah and Virginia Tucker, with eight, and James and Julia Farrist, with ten.53

The largest district, Union, in the northwest and lying east and west of County Road leading from Greenbottom on the Ohio River to Mud River, possessed only one black household, that of previously mentioned former Cabell County slave and current farm-worker Anderson Ross (Rose) and his long time companion, former Cabell County slave and servant Mary Lacy, both thirty-five and West Virginia born, and three children, fifteen-year-old farm worker George, twelve-year-old Christina, and three-year-old mulatto John P. Although schools were in the area, neither George nor Christina attended, suggesting that either their value to household maintenance precluded school or the racial dynamics of the area precluded the possibility. The state did not pass any provision addressing the funding, appropriation, and enumeration of Negro schools until 1872. These five lived amongst 972 whites in a rural, predominately agricultural area, a situation rendering unlikely a separate school for black people. And a similar geographic, demographic, and social circumstance existed in Grant Township, in the northeast corner of the county, adjacent to Lincoln County, where two non-white, native-born households resided. Mulattoes William and Margaret Coalman
shared one with their two young children, aged two and one. Thirty-year-old William worked as a railroad worker while twenty-seven-year-old Margaret, who could neither read or write, worked as a domestic servant. Forty-seven-year-old Rosa Jourdan, who could neither read nor write, headed the other household. These five resided in a township of 980 whites.\textsuperscript{54}

McComas, located in the southern part of the county, straddling the Guyandotte River, was home to ten non-whites, nine blacks and one mulatto, eleven-year old Henry Smith. These ten resided within a total population of 1,149. George and Nancy Morris, fifty-two and fifty-five, respectively, maintained a household consisting of four other children. George, an illiterate farm-worker and Nancy, a housekeeper, possessed a personal estate valued at a remarkable $1215, a sum nearly four times higher than any other black household in the county, and an amount greater than the total reported wealth of county’s remaining black population.

The large size of some households, the age differentials between members, and the differing surnames within them were typical for black (and even white households) of the era, and provide evidence of the power of kinship and social networks in 1870 Cabell County. One historian recognized the significance of this trait: “It is clear that, in rural southern society, the nuclear family frequently co-habited within a larger, rather flexible household. Moreover, neighboring households were often linked by ties of kinship. These linkages helped to determine very specific (but by no means static) patterns of reciprocal duties among household members, indicating that kinship clusters, rather than nuclear
families, defined women’s and men’s daily labor.”55 Charlestonian Mrs. Fay Peters Gamble Davis, discussing the continuity between the slave era origins of her family and the inter-generational family/kinship networks binding its members, remarks, “The first generation of Peters had qualities of being strong, loving and fond of children. These qualities seem to have been handed down through the generations. For instance, my nephew Andrew Peters, adopted his sister-in-law’s child when a burgular [sic] killed her mother while she was decorating her Christmas tree, and also another little girl. Also, it was customary to name a son for a brother. Joseph [her grandfather] left no sons, but there are several Joseph Peters named after him.”56

Black households comprised diverse kin, generational, and racial configurations impacting economic status for better and worse. The three Morris households, containing seventeen individuals, nine adults and eight children, controlled personal estates worth an extraordinary $1555 a sum exceeding the $1203 amassed by the county’s remaining seventeen African American households. None of the five school-age children within the Morris households attended school. The household of thirty-three-year-old West Virginian and Barboursville resident Patsey Dean, included sixteen-and seven-year-old Frederick and Henry Wheatfield, thirteen, eight, and five-year-old Marcellis, Susan, and Charles Mills, and two-year-old Anabelle Price, all from West Virginia. None of the school-age children attended school. The household of Virginia-born Elijah and Virginia Tucker included the following family members: fifty and fifty-one-year-old Virginians Jupiter and Virginia Vivey, sixteen- and
eleven-year-old Lupita and Leah Vivey, from West Virginia and Virginia, respectively, twelve-year-old West Virginian Rose, and eleven-year-old Virginia-born Henry Blake. Leah, Rose, and Henry attended school.

Though no longer shackled to the institution, work and land still bound the county’s black residents to a particular lifestyle, which, when combined with their low numbers and dispersed population largely precluded school attendance. Moreover, the lack of interest by the state legislature did not help matters any. But, importantly, given their economic realities, the county’s African Americans did not confront patronage or tenancy, as African Americans did in Virginia and throughout the South, as a transitional economic system. Thus, it is probable that the absence of racially based economic systems helped to facilitate the development and institutionalization of wage-labor capitalism in Huntington.

Like African Americans throughout the south, the immediate post-emancipation period for black West Virginian’s was pregnant with possibilities. Collis P. Huntington’s decision to establish the western trans-shipment terminal in the county for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad that would connect Richmond, Virginia to the Ohio River Valley compelled black migration into the region and county, continuing the multi-tiered transition in the journey of the county’s black population. The actual founding of Huntington, West Virginia, in 1871, encompassed the first phase of industrial capitalism that would transform Cabell County, Appalachia, and America, and fundamentally alter the lives of black migrants who arrived into the region seeking gainful employment, which is the subject of the next chapter. But, at this point, the black population in the county
was too small, too dispersed, and too poor to witness much change in their lives beyond the fact that they were all now free.
2 Posey reports 18,371 were slave and 2,773 were free. See Thomas E. Posey, *The Negro Citizen of West Virginia* (Institute, WV: The Press of West Virginia State College, 1934), 5.
4 As Willie Lee Rose contends, the collision between the planters’ and ex-slaves’ interests angered the planter, who still sought unencumbered control of land and labor. “Many mistakes made between 1865 and 1869 were owing to psychological defensiveness of a displaced elite whose world-view was shaken not only by their conquerors but also by their erstwhile slaves.” Willie Lee Rose, “Masters Without Slaves,” *Slavery and Freedom*, ed. William W. Freehling (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 89.
8 Eller, “Mountain Road,” 73.
9 Bias, *A History of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company and its Predecessors, 1784-1977*, 81. Ronald D. Eller relays the quoted figure is less than the amount initially sought by the railroad from the county. He states the following figures sought from various West Virginia counties: “Kanawha, $500,000; Greenbrier, $250,000; Cabell, $300,000; Monroe, $200,000; Mercer and Raleigh, $100,000; Fayette and Putnam, $150,000; Pocahontas, Webster, Nicholas, Wyoming, Wayne, Logan and Lincoln, $50,000.” See Eller, “Mountain Road,” 20.
10 As quoted in Wallace, the resolution reads, “all other white males thereof who are neither minors….or under a conviction of treason and who have been a resident of the state for a year and of the county thirty days and are assessed with a tax therein for the year 1867 to vote.” See George Selden Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families*, (Richmond: Garrett & Massie, 1935) 44. Also see Bias, *A History of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company and its Predecessors, 1784-1977*, 81.
11 Addressing Fontaine’s professional career, Bias relays, “Fontaine served as President of the Virginia Central during its entire span, 1850-1868, with the exception of the fiscal year, 1865-1866, when Wickham defeated him because of unfounded tales of ill health. In all Colonel Fontaine was President of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company and its predecessor for twenty-two years; of the Louisa, 1845-1850; of the Virginia Central, 1850-1865 and 1866-1867; and for approximately three months in 1868.” See Bias, 83.
12 Correspondence from President Edward Fontaine to John Cunningham (West Virginia), September 29, 1867, *Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company. Records 1867-1869, A & M No.: 713, West Virginia Historical Archives & Manuscripts Collections, West Virginia & Regional History Collection, Charles C. Wise, Jr., Library, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV.
13 Eller, 15.
14 A popular story conveyed through the years by locals is that Guyandotte lost the terminal due to an incident which occurred when Huntington and his party visited the town, and tied their horses to hitching posts to go explore the town on foot. According to local historians, Huntington’s horse backed around on the sidewalk obstructing passing pedestrians and compelling the mayor to fine Huntington five dollars. For this outrage, Huntington moved the terminal downriver. See Bias, 105 and James E. Casto, *Huntington: An Illustrated History* (Northbridge, California: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1985), 23. See also “The City of Huntington,” *Herald Dispatch*, December 24, 1895.
Evans, Collis Potter Huntington, 517.

15 Casto reports, “The years 1830-1930 are generally considered by river historians to be the ‘century of the steamboat.’” See Huntington, 14. C. P. Huntington did prove to be prescient. Leland R. Johnson explains, even four years after its founding, the city was already hailed as one of the most important ports on the Ohio River. The city’s importance as a river port and freight transshipment point continued to the point that by the mid-twentieth century, Huntington was recognized as the nation’s “greatest inland port by the mid-twentieth century.” See Leland R. Stanford, An Illustrated History of the Huntington District U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1754-1974 (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1977), 77.


17 Eller, 43.


19 Ibid., 13

20 John Williams Matheus, interviewed by Bishop and Iselman, Slave Narratives: a Folk History of Slavery in the United States From Interviews with Former Slaves: The Ohio Narratives, Volume 12, Federal Writers Project, United States Works Project Administration (USWPA); Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, July 8, 1937.


22 Rebecca A. Shepherd states, “Demographer Everett S. Lee hypothesizes that the tendency of an individual to migrate is affected by the number of positive and negative factors at both origin and destination, as well as the number of obstacles to be surmounted in moving from one location to another. Lee argues that the urge to migrate is particularly strong in a country possessing regions of some diversity, or an unexplored frontier. In such situations the normal inertia of residential persistence is overcome by the desire to migrate to take advantage of perceived opportunities at the new location.” See Rebecca A. Shepherd, “Restless Americans: The Geographic Mobility of Farm Laborers in the Old Midwest, 1850-1870,” Ohio History, Vol. 89, No. 1 (Winter, 1980), 26.


25 Charles S. Johnson, “How Much is the Migration a Flight from Persecution,” Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life, Vol. 1, No. 9 (September 1923): 272. Two other contemporary sources refute the notion that black migration was a product of impotency and not of practical forethought. Neil McMillen’s reveals that Afro-Mississippians migrated internally and externally as a safety valve against the institutional racism, psychological terror, economic exploitation, and physical violence perpetuated by the overwhelming reality of white supremacy throughout the state. McMillen also reveals how Black Mississippians, of all classes and occupations, initiated individual action and communal political measures in the hope of overcoming societal constraints. See Neil McMillen, Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989). James R. Grossman’s study of black southern migration to Chicago also disdains the power of outside influences motivating black response. He argues that Blacks were not compelled by religious visions or white oppression instead they left for a variety
of reasons including disenfranchisement, violence, inability to earn cash wages, and lack of educational opportunities. They choose Chicago because they possessed a world-view situating it as a better place to live, not because it manifested some mythical quality as the Promised Land. Further, Grossman argues that the practical nature of their response was not an aberration but emblematic of a migratory process initiated by blacks as resistance against prevailing racial ideologies, economic upheaval, and socio-political constraints at the local level. Blacks, he argues, had always moved; at the local level from the farm to the lumber mill and from the town to the city, and even back to a previous site. See James R. Grossman, Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners and the Great Migration (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).


29 Eighth Census of the United States, 1860 and Ninth Census of the United States, 1870.


31 Wallace reports, “As early as 1873 the record discloses there was a tobacco warehouse on the hills south of the city and in 1875 the Legislature passed an act providing for the inspection of tobacco and the establishment of state tobacco warehouses at Huntington and Parkesburg.” See George Selden Wallace, Cabell County Annals and Families (1935; repr., Baltimore, MD: Clearfield Company, Inc., Richmond, VA, 1997), 65.


33 Using the Compendium of the Tenth Census, Dianne Swann-Wright relays “colored” population in 1860 Buckingham County was 9,171 and 7,711 in 1870, a decline of 1460 over the decade. See Dianne Swann-Wright, A Way out of No Way: Claiming Family and Freedom in the New South (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 12.


For a fuller discussion on the development of patron/patronage in Buckingham County, see Swann-Wright, *A Way out of No Way*, 23-42.

Ibid., 92.

Ibid., 37.


Swann-Wright, 94.

Ibid.


Ibid., 84-5.


Ibid.


Ibid.

While not conclusive of a previous master-slave relationship, it is certainly suggestive that three separate white Morris households are listed as slave owners in 1860. The three households of John, owner of twelve, Charles, owner of four, and James, owner of three, totaled 19 bondpersons. See *the Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States*, 1860.

Ninth Census of the United States, 1870.

Ibid.

John Shafer is listed as John Shaver, aged twenty-six. The *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880, lists him as John Shaffer, aged thirty-eight. See the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880 (Washington: GPO).

Ibid.


Chapter 3: Into the Crucible--The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad and the Black Industrial Worker, 1870-1900.
…while the Northern free labor market required unfettered worker movement, the labor movement of the South relied on certain kinds of restraints on the mobility of the poorest workers, those men, women, and children who would not voluntarily return to neo-slavery. From this perspective, the story of the freedpeople marks a distinctive chapter in the history of the nineteenth-century American working class, a history of “restlessness” borne of hope for a better life in a place of one’s own choosing.¹

“Money? Lawsy chile, I neber dun seen eny money ’til aftah I dun cum to Gallipolis aftah der war. An’ how I lik’ to heah it jingle, if I jes’ had five cents, I’d like it jingle.”--James Campbell.²

The obliteration of slavery across the nation and the devastation of large swaths of the South drastically altered the fortunes of thousands across the Virginia piedmont. Many planters recognized the precariousness of their situation and sought to reassert their authority and discourage black enterprise and freedom. For example, in 1866 the “citizens” of Cumberland County, Virginia, met to adopt “regulations between the farmers and the negroes,” which included the following rules for black laborers: “The men will not be allowed to converse during working hours; they will not be allowed to raise stock or fowls for their own use; they will be charged with all the property, stock, or fruit on the farm that may be lost or stolen; they will have 30 minutes for breakfast, and 45 minutes for dinner; they will be fined one dollar for each time they are impudent, or are guilty of swearing, quarreling, fighting, or wilful (sic) disobedience.”³

This explicit rebuff to their new circumstance and aspirations, repeated in various forms throughout the South, and dissatisfaction with the new socio-economic realities of the constrictive cash wage labor system, challenged many
blacks in early industrial America. Recalling his experiences in Catlettsburg, Kentucky, located eleven miles west of Huntington, Reverend John R. Cox, noted, “The employing class of Kentuckians, many of them descendants of slave owners, are prone to be reactionary in their attitudes towards those who toiled, this is reflected in low wages and inferior working conditions, a condition which affects both white and black labor alike, in many sections of the state.” In short, the rise of a free black working class was a complicated and contested process, in which “emancipation entailed a dual struggle for ex-slaves: 1) against the prior sovereignty that masters and mistresses exercised over their lives as bondsmen and women; 2) against the ascendant efforts to subject them to ‘landowners’ management and to the discipline of an abstract market, which northern Republican proponents and their southern white allies defined as freedom.”

This chapter examines the nature of black labor during the industrialization of southern West Virginia. Attracted to the prospect of gainful employment as wage laborers, thousands of black workers endured long hours, back-breaking labor, and dangerous conditions to connect the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad from Richmond to the western transshipment point of Huntington. In the process, they transformed the rugged New River Valley and the nascent coal mining region of southern West Virginia, enabling access to and extraction of the rich coal veins hidden in the mountains, and more importantly, the transportation of the coal to regional and national markets. In conjunction with this development, the completion of the railroad transformed Huntington, as thousands of black migrants acquired employment with the C & O Shops as well as other jobs within the city’s expanding
commercial, manufacturing, and service sectors. Importantly, whether employed on the “line” or the “yard,” the saloon or the shop, black migrants remained locked at the bottom of the city’s occupational ladder.

Given these themes, conceptualization of the contingent nature of class formation is warranted. In his study “Working-Class Formation: Constructing Cases and Comparisons,” Ira Katznelson argues a concept of class based on four interconnected layers: capitalist structure; ways of life on the job and in the community; workers’ political and organizational “dispositions;” and workers’ collective responses and actions. This four-level theory of class formation, Katznelson contends, permits the gap between history and theory to be bridged, modifying the simple formula that posits class formation moves inexorably and formulaically from one stage in the process to the next, before ending with workers exhibiting class-conscious conduct. Katzelson rightly observes that “groups of people sharing motivational constructs (‘disposition to behave’ in a particular way) may or may not act collectively to transform disposition to behavior.” Similarly, historian Edward Thompson concludes that “Class formations …arise at the intersection of determination and self-activity: the working class ‘made itself as much as it was made.’” Class, is not a thing that results from objective economic determinants, instead it is a “happening,” to borrow another Thompsonian phrase, a set of contingent relationships and possibilities. This examination of black Huntington and its metamorphosis is framed with the contingent nature of class formation in mind. The formation of Huntington’s black working class entailed black migrants influencing their circumstance as much as they were influenced by
them. Their transformation was not pre-ordained or pre-determined; nor was it exclusively top-down. It was the outgrowth of choices and actions that manifested the most reasoned path to self-preservation, self-awareness, and/or self-actualization within a capitalist, urban-industrial, white society. As freedman Charles Anderson stated, “Well, after the war I was free. But it didn’t make much difference to me; I just had to work for myself instead of somebody else. And I just rambled around. Sort of a floater. But I always worked, and I always eat regular, and had regular rest. Work never hurt nobody.”7

From the early-to mid-1800s forward, the presence of African American laborers in western Virginia and West Virginia helped bind the area to a broader regional commercial network. Slaves helped make the antebellum Kanawha Valley salt mines productive and profitable.8 As early as 1852 the value of black labor to the construction of railroads in the region was well known. Indeed, the construction of four tunnels in the Blue Ridge Mountains for the Virginia Central Railroad Company had been accomplished “with pick and shovel, the brawn of negro laborers and the hauling power of mules. The construction gangs had no dump carts, steam drills, or modern blasting powder.”9 After the Civil War an influx of black laborers, including a young Booker T. Washington, arrived to work the area’s coalmines.10 In the late-1860s, after arriving with his family from Natural Bridge, Virginia, to the Kanawha Valley, the oldest son of John Wesley Woods, John Wesley, worked in the region’s coal mines and rock quarries.11 Craftsmen and artisans also arrived into the region. After learning the craft of shoemaking, and being hired out by his master to different shoe shops, Lorenzo L. Ivy’s father,
traveled to Charleston, West Virginia, after the war on the advice of Union soldiers. His son recounts, “He an’ my oldes brother went up dere an’ wuked for de whole summer after Lee surrendered. Den dey came back to Danville de followin’ Spring.’”

After the war, Collis P. Huntington along with his army of workers initiated the industrialization of southern West Virginia through the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad. More than a dozen tunnels were projected, aggregating some 24,000 linear feet, more than four and half miles. Enormous amounts of dirt and stone required removal. Miles of roadbeds adjacent to West Virginia’s rivers had to be raised above flood level. To carry out his plans Huntington needed millions of dollars and thousands of laborers to cross to the rugged mountains of the southern part of the state. Black southerners played an integral and vital role felling forests, raising roads, driving spikes and blasting tunnels. In fact, not more than 125 miles southeast of the town, in the primeval wilderness of the New River Valley, a stout and skilled John Henry, along with nearly 1,000 men, most of them African American, constructed the mile long Big Bend Tunnel, “then the longest tunnel in America at the time of its completion.” From the sweat and blood of black people, native-born whites and European immigrants, the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway advanced from Virginia to the Ohio River. After migrating from Richmond immediately after the Civil War, freedman Charles Washington worked for the C & O as a section hand before acquiring work as a brakeman in the Huntington yards in the early 1870s. As a white boy of fourteen, A. W. (Alex) Hamilton worked in early 1870 on the construction of the
West Virginia extension between White Sulphur Springs and Hawk’s Nest (near Charleston). Born and raised near the James River and Kanawha Turnpike, Hamilton’s recollection that “all the stone workers were Irish” illuminate the importance of immigrant labor to the railroad. His recollections also show the importance of black labor to operations and the nature of their employment:

The actual construction of the extension was begun in the early spring of 1870, and the whole of the extension from White Sulphur Springs to what is now the City of Huntington seems to have been laid out in sections, contracts awarded, and work began almost simultaneously, as work seemed to be going on at the same time for the entire distance, the labor being negroes from Virginia and North Carolina, which were brought on the trains to White Sulphur Springs, where they began the long trek on foot over the James River and Kanawha turnpike (now Midland Trail) to the point or points where they were to work. These gangs would run from one to three hundred, accompanied by ‘chuck-wagon’ and the boss or bosses in charge.15

Overwhelmingly composed of single men, work gangs frequently existed on the frontier in isolated work camps. Notably, though, some of these camps grew into enclaves, boom towns, and even communities, with many named after railroad officials, i.e., Alderson, Crozet, Talcott, Thurmond, Huntington, and Parsons, to name a few. Addressing the establishment of shanty towns affiliated with the work camps one historian relays, “Many of these shanty towns developed into permanent communities with stores, churches, and schools serving the needs of construction crews.”16 Importantly, life in the work camps provided opportunity. Extended periods of isolation afforded time to save substantial sums of money. Many black
laborers acquired enough money to purchase farms when the road they were working on was completed. Many also acquired skills and took great pride in blacksmithing, masonry, tunneling, and mining.

Given their number, efficacy, and cost, there is little doubt that African American laborers were the preferred labor force on the Chesapeake and Ohio. Contributing to this development was the known quality of black labor and the unknown worthiness of the European immigrant. As Hamilton noted, at least as far as the railroad in the New River Valley was concerned, in 1870 “The Italian had not yet been invented.”17 One Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad document published in 1873 by the New York banking firm Fisk & Hatch commented on the perceived physical and cultural limitations of the European immigrant as a worker within the New River Valley:18 “To the European immigrant, unaccustomed to the use of the axe, this fine growth of timber has been deemed an objection, and he has winded his way to the prairies of the West—with their chills and fevers, which most surely destroy the general health of his family—rather than undergo the unaccustomed task of clearing, in the mountain forests, the acres he needs.”19 Even the suitability of native whites was questioned: “Even to our American woodsman this has been a serious task, arising from the necessity that heretofore existed of destroying the timber to get rid of it, in addition to the ordinary labor of clearing.”20.

Significantly, there seems to have been little racial strife in the construction of the railroad. Perhaps part of the reason is that accounts of the construction of the line were overwhelmingly produced by white observers. While acknowledging the color line in living accommodations, these accounts depicted harmonious relations
on the line. Another reason is that there existed little wage discrimination between the races with skilled African American laborers earning proportionally more than their unskilled white counterparts. Charles Nordhoff, a New York writer who toured the line in 1871, noted: “Wherever we rode, I saw whites and Negroes working together, pushing at the same car, shoveling at the same dirt heap, lifting together at one rock. In the work there is absolutely no distinction of color; nor did I in any case see any dislike, or bullying or a colored man by a white man.”21 Certainly, another factor to consider is that black laborers were aware of the constraints impacting their employment. While white accounts of black laborers by engineers and contractors celebrated their industriousness, aptitude, and equanimity, it is important to note that “in order to maintain his position, the Negro laborer had to be sober, hard-working, and well disciplined.”22

There is, however, evidence of resistance by black laborers to the dictates of industrial-capitalism. On at least one occasion white engineers and contractors supervising construction of the line through the New River Valley complained that many of the Negroes “would go home to Virginia during harvest and at Christmastime, thus delaying the progress of the road.”23 In 1870 black and white “workers all down the line” from Guyandotte to Charleston struck when they were denied a pay increase from $1.50 to $1.75 per day.24 The fact that black workers felt empowered enough to resist the pressures and mandates imposed by the railroad and, by extension, the wage-capitalistic system suggests that they recognized their value as workers.
While few authoritative records detailing the experiences of the labor force in the construction of Big Bend survive, examination of the particulars illuminates a great deal about the nature and peril of early black migrant labor on the railroad. Foremost was the setting. In his travels over the Chesapeake and Ohio, Charles Northcutt, describes the region: “When we mounted our horses we bade goodbye to roads and entered the New River country…a howling wilderness, through which the engineer parties of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad have constructed what it pleases them to call a path, …if you have ridden in the Yo-Semite [sic], you will not find a trail steeper and more difficult than that curious descent, and not two miles but eighty long. More than two years were consumed in the survey of that wild country.” Another traveler conveyed the conditions endured by some residents of the valley when he stated, “No house of any kind, only squalid log shanties filled with negroes and miserable white men.”

To attract laborers to the mountain, ex-Confederate Army Captain John Johnson recruited, among his pool, ex-slaves to the precarious worksite. Johnson was just one of many ex-Confederates employed by the railroad in positions of authority in the New River Valley, including Claiborne R. Mason, Colonel T.M. R. Talcott, General Williams C. Wickham, and Cabell County resident and one-time sheriff, George McKendree. One historian relays that, “Mason’s long experience controlling men and recapturing runaways made him an able if brutal boss for the C & O. Many Southerners already hated and feared Mason for what he had done to stop Confederate desertions.”
While the exact composition of work crews at Big Bend is unknown, the *Richmond Dispatch* reports in 1872, “The majority are negroes. They are preferred because you can cuss a nigger, but whenever an attempt is made to abuse a white, there is a row.”31 One writer relays that as their ranks diminished by accident, disease, and death, Johnson and other C & O contractors dispatched agents south to fetch new workers for rendezvous with the mountain. “Once hired, it was hard to break Johnson’s hold. Such contractors kept their workers isolated, far from home, and often deep in debt to the commissary. No doubt many ‘owed their souls to the company store,’ as a later song about coal miners put it.”32

Work on the tunnel was dangerous, arduous, and back-breaking for all involved. “Six hammer men working 12-hour shifts needed a full day to bore enough holes for just one blast, which advanced the heading by only ten feet.”33 Fatalities among the tunnel workers are believed to be incredibly high. Many died of tunnel fever (later known as silicosis), caused by the fetid stone dust generated by nitroglycerin explosives and the smothering heat encountered in the poorly ventilated cavern. In total, 83,000 pounds of explosives was used constructing the tunnel: so dangerous was nitroglycerin during the period that the Nitroglycerin Act was passed in 1869, forbidding its use without the permission of the Secretary of State. So widespread was concern, that in 1871 the editors of *Scientific America* argued against the general and indiscriminate use of the explosive. Normally delivered frozen to reduce accidents, Louis Chappell states, “that such precautions… taken against the dangers of nitroglycerin in the hands of Negroes in the Big Bend Tunnel and elsewhere in the C & O Railroad seems to lack support in
Accidents resulting from bungled blasting and falling rocks were widespread. One historian “estimates that hundreds of laborers, men and boys, of African and Irish descent, perished during the three-year construction of the tunnel. The dead were buried quickly and unceremoniously in makeshift pits near the portals at both ends and covered with rocks.” Another authority argues it was in the best interests of the C & O contractors to keep their workers’ origins obscure. “Negroes who died at Big Bend hailed from nowhere and had not been christened,” he observed, and “it was easy not to notice when such men were used up and cast aside.” Freedman James Henry Yancey noted “no one knows how many men or mules died” in the deadly construction of Big Bend Tunnel, an area he worked laying railroad from 1870 to 1874 before acquiring employment in the Huntington C & O shops. One black mountaineer, whose two cousins labored on the tunnel, recalled the fate of many workers. “They said Big Bend Tunnel was a terrible-like place, and many men got killed there. Mules too. And they threwed the dead men and mules and all together there in that fill between the mountains.”

To what extent C. P. Huntington knew or cared about the day-to-day operations at Big Bend or the reputed death toll is speculative. However, beyond dispute are three facts: he needed to sell ten million in bonds to New York investors, he promised the Virginia legislature to finish the tunneling by 1872, and he thought nitroglycerin critical to achieving his plans. It is difficult to imagine an overriding concern on his part for general labor or worksite issues: that was the job of his subordinates, the contractors, engineers, managers, directors and superintendents. In fact, it is more likely that Huntington spent his time dealing with
the company’s substantial debt load, which increased dramatically during construction of the tunnel and railway to Huntington. The death of hundreds (perhaps thousands) of free African American workers, as well as those of three hundred and eighty African American convicts leased by the Virginia State Penitentiary to the railroad between September 1871 and September 1872 occurred during this segment of construction. On the lack of information on this latter development, one authority relays, “Aside from the stray mention in the penitentiary minutes, the event seemed elusive. No one mentioned the deaths in the local newspapers, company reports, the private letters of railroad builders, or even the proceedings of the Virginia Assembly, where the penitentiary board had presumably reported its findings.” Despite Huntington’s recognition of black people’s humanity, one black observer noted, “He makes no distinction between race and creed and the negro under him has a full chance. For the negro his sympathy has been always of a most substantial kind.” These deaths probably raised no outcry because thousands of black migrant laborers in the New River Valley were introduced to the machinations of industrial labor under the supervision of a number of ex-Confederates who were beholden to the dictates of capitalism and racism.

Constructing a road through the mountains was an exceedingly difficult task, with no mechanized equipment available and seemingly insurmountable engineering problems. One writer relates, “In the summer of 1872 a wooden bridge gave way and the ‘whole (material) train, engine, flats, fireman, engineer, and all on board, were plunged into the awful abyss below.’ Trestles under construction often
gave way like a stack of cards that had become top-heavy. Tunnels caved in and caused many injuries and loss of life.”

Even after completion, train travel could be perilous. In a letter to his mother, a bridegroom describes his journey “on a 28 car” C & O train through the New River Valley during the winter of 1873. A synopsis of events includes the following: derailment of three cars, a near encounter with live nitroglycerin, derailment of four cars, passenger relocation to the locomotive, derailment of three more cars, death of a black worker, several landslides, and a litany of other travails before finally departing the valley. By the time the ordeal ended, the bridegroom had endured a ten-day sojourn from Huntington to Richmond.

Black laborers also died after completion of construction and the railroad became operational. Newspaper articles report numerous encounters with occupational hazards resulting in injury, loss of limb, and death. During the summer of 1875, two black laborers in the Huntington area were killed within a month of each other, including Lewis Richardson, “a very good man and who has worked on that train three years.” Richardson’s death, resulting from a fall between cars in which “the train ran over him and cut his head right in two, throwing teeth and brains off on one side of the track,” illustrated the dangers of railroad employment for novice and experienced alike. In fact, in 1880, the second leading cause of accidental death for men between the ages of 20 and 60 within the Ohio Valley was railroad-related accidents.

Despite the dangers, the railroads provided opportunity for black migrants seeking gainful employment. As noted in Chapter 2, in 1871 the railroad employed
5,000 black laborers. They worked 10 hour days, and one historian relayed that they “seemed contented with their pay of less than a dollar a day.” Certainly this observation is subject to interpretation especially considering the railroad experienced labor shortages during this period. At one point, Huntington, now president of the C & O, even considered the use of Chinese laborers. Though the number of whites and immigrant laborers far exceeded that of blacks in southern West Virginia during the 1870s, there is no doubt that black migrant laborers were sought after and valued by railroads. As one historian notes, “Most of the ‘day laborers’ on the line were freed blacks from eastern Virginia who were drawn to the railroad by high wages.” In 1871, the Charlottesville Chronicle complained that the Chesapeake and Ohio was draining off all the Negro labor in Virginia, leaving many farms and plantations neglected. As the editor affirmed, “They will listen much more readily to the agents of the railroad companies than to the planter.” As A. A. Taylor remarks, “Testimony was all but unanimous that the migrant labor was efficient.” In 1870, the Cabell County Press reported, “Work has now been regularly commenced on nearly every section from Guyandotte to Charleston. There are at present about 300 negroes engaged on different sections of the work, and we learn that they make excellent hands.” By the fall of 1871, Huntington served as the center of much of this activity, with more than a thousand men employed in various projects in the immediate proximity of the town. Black workers undoubtedly worked on the completion of the line from Huntington to Charleston in December 1872; to Coalbury in March 1872; and to Kanawha Falls in June 1872. Referring to migrant railroad laborers in West Virginia and Ohio, a
correspondent for a Cincinnati newspaper wrote in 1872, “I am informed by the contractors that the negroes make the most faithful hands they can get.”

Despite this affirmation, it is not difficult to imagine many black migrant workers’ ambivalence at their new status as wage laborers within the C & O: the arduous, dangerous, coercive, constraining, and potentially alienating nature of industrial work made for complex transitions, even when providing some solace.

Early on in the construction of the line, the assistant engineer mandated that contractors pay no more than “a dollar and board per day for ordinary laborers,” and set the hours of labor at “six o’clock AM till sunset allowing for one hour for dinner.” Additionally, for many, it must have been reminiscent of the immediate post-emancipation days during which a gang of forty thousand black men known as trackliners built and rebuilt the railroads of the South after the Civil War. As one historian relays, “Tracklining is the lowest-paid railroad work, paying less than a dollar a day after the Civil War. Most trackliners had been born slaves, and before the Civil War Southern states had not allowed the teaching of slaves and free blacks. Very few trackliners were literate.”

Arguably, John Henry, in his futile quest to outperform a machine, to leave behind his past and prove his manhood and humanity while simultaneously grappling with the insistent dictates of “the jingle,” embodied the duality within black migrant struggles. As sociologist Guy Johnson illuminated in 1929, Henry’s iconic life encapsulated a culture of enduring “myths, legends, sagas and traditions that contained the essential ingredients of memory, endurance and triumph which are necessary for the survival of a race or a nation.” In essence, Henry spoke to a
generation because he embodied black peoples’ efforts to find their place in America.\textsuperscript{60} One version of his ballad speaks to this point:

When John Henry was a little baby  
A-sittin’ on his mama’s knee  
He said, “That tunnel on the C & O line  
Going to be the death of me, Lord, Lord,

The captain said to John Henry,  
“I’ve got a contest for you  
If you can beat that steam drill down,  
I’ll give you a hundred dollars in your hand, Lord, Lord  
I’ll give you a hundred dollars in your hand.”

John Henry said to his captain  
“Well, a man ain’t nothing but a man,  
But before I let that steam drill beat me down,  
I’ll die with a hammer in my hand, Lord, Lord  
I’ll die with a hammer in my hand.”\textsuperscript{61}

It may be tempting to diminish the historical importance of John Henry, yet the fact remains that songs chronicling his exploits were already widespread by the 1880s, and that one-fifth of the nation’s railroad mileage in 1939 was constructed between 1886 and 1893.\textsuperscript{62} By the time Johnson initiated his study, Henry’s legend had circulated throughout the country, making him perhaps “the most well known Negro personage” among black workers. He was a moral hero who demolished the stereotypes and expectations of society by playing \textit{within the rules}. Discussing Henry and legendary twentieth-century boxer Joe Louis, Lawrence Levine notes, “Their morality stemmed…from the two characteristics that typified their lives: they never preyed upon their own people and they won their victories within the confines of the legal system in which they lived. They were moral figures, too, in
the sense that their lives provided more than vehicles for momentary escape; they provided models of action and emulation for other black people.”

McDowell County native and Huntington educator Memphis T. Garrison addresses the power of the myth in her memoir when she states that prior to his death, her father “had all of those John Henry things, ballads of all kinds and he would read them.” In the final analysis, history masks whether, and to what extent, black workers on the C & O sang John Henry’s ballad. But given his origins, and the dispersion of his legend, it is easy to believe that regardless of the version, his ballad was a work song that assisted black laborers in enduring harsh conditions both physically and psychically throughout the Central Appalachia region.

If the C & O was the ignition, coal was the fuel both for Huntington’s dramatic economic expansion and black influx into the Central Appalachian Plateau (see Map 1). This expanse, comprising nine counties in central and southern West Virginia, as well as parts of eastern Kentucky, southwestern Virginia and northern Tennessee, lacked the required transportation networks prior to the completion of the C & O to move economically the more than fifty million acres of fossil fuel, the nation’s largest supply. In 1871, though, coal was not yet “King” in the Central Appalachian Plateau: West Virginia’s topography and the sheer scope and volume of its southern coalfields initially slowed capital infusion and worker influx throughout the 1870s. However, the rate for both would substantially increase by the 1880s. Yet, even with the retarded growth, substantial rewards awaited.

Historically, the five southern counties of West Virginia –Fayette, McDowell, Raleigh, Mercer, and Wyoming—and a bit of Tazewell County, Virginia, were
collectively known as the Smokeless Coalfields, home to the highest quality coal, and deemed, as Charles Kenneth Sullivan states, “literally too precious to burn in the ordinary sense.”  

The opening up of nearly 420 miles of railway, through stretches of dense and difficult terrain, from the Ohio into Virginia, heralded a dramatic transformation of the Central Appalachian Plateau, and would not have occurred without substantial financial assistance from local and state authorities. The conclusion “marked an epoch of new growth for a vast area and opened a new channel of trade between the East and the West,” an Ironton, Ohio, newspaper reported, before concluding, “the effect that the opening must have in development of West Virginia can hardly be over-estimated.” Thus, in 1873, when the first C&O train traveled west, down the iron rails from Charleston to Huntington, linking the Ohio Valley with the Kanawha and New River Gorge, and Richmond further east, it initiated the industrialization of the central Appalachian coalfields and the rise of an industrial city. The region’s political economy and cultural moorings were immediately and irrevocably changed in the process, altering “the fundamental patterns of mountain life.” Among the public ceremonies commemorating the event was one in which a barrel of water from the James River was poured into the Ohio River at Huntington. Soon thereafter, as Cerinda Evans states, “a train load of coal arrived at Huntington every night about twelve o’clock. The coal was put on barges ready for the towboats to take down the Ohio next day. Sometimes as many as 10,000 bushels of coal were shipped in one day.”
Ironically, the completion of the line coincided with the nation-wide Depression of 1873, complicating Huntington’s aspirations for his railroad and impacting his workers. As one local authority notes,

September came the terrible crash of ’73 with its Black Friday, plunging the whole country into gloom. The money markets fell, the government stopped specie payment, and the C & O, on which this railroad town depended, almost quit. No pay car came to town for six months. Wage-earners were in near riot. Other citizens began to leave for better points. 72

The Depression exacerbated an already untenable financial situation for Huntington. That year, the average cost per mile of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad was $88,000 per mile, nearly 2 ½ times the $36,000 average per mile of Southern railroads.73 As one authority notes, “So deficient were the company’s operating funds that for five months after the completion of the line to Huntington, the employees of the railroad received no pay.”74 In Richmond, on November 29, 1873, 200 African American common laborers employed at the Chesapeake and Ohio’s Church Hill tunnel project struck over pay. Employed in the dangerous work of tunnel building, with nearly one man a week killed on the job since the beginning of the project, and receiving pay that had never exceeded one dollar a day, the men grew frustrated and angry over several missed pay-days since the depression began. By the end of November, the men had worked for three months without receiving wages. After receiving their pay packets for September on November 28 the men received “nothing but promises” for work completed in October and November, a situation the men felt was intolerable. With previously saved money in their
pockets, the men refused to return to work until the receipt of their back pay. Rather than meet the workers' demands, the company contracted 200 newly landed Italian immigrants, summarily replacing the black workers, who not only lost their jobs but also their two months' back wages.⁷⁵

In December 1873, with the depression deepening, C & O employees were paid in script “bearing the promise” to pay in thirty, sixty, or ninety days.⁷⁶ That winter, in Huntington, only the personal intervention of W. C. Wickham, then vice-president of the company, ensured the extension of further credit for a limited time to the company’s laborers by the city’s merchants.⁷⁷ Local employees continued to suffer from the railroad’s financial difficulties until at least May of 1874, when one local newspaper noted, “The pay car on the C. & O. R.R. visited Huntington on last Monday and payed[sic] the employe[e]s in thirty and sixty day “scrip.”⁷⁸ Scrip was utilized with great regularity in the isolated mining and logging towns of central Appalachia during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. In effect, substitute currency, scrip usually confined workers’ purchasing power for meals and goods to the company owned store or designated proxies. Forced to pay mark-ups for meals and/or goods purchased, employees frequently were subject to the dictates of the company, reinforcing their dependency and powerlessness. Still, unlike in the Church Hill incident, its utilization certainly demonstrates some sense of employer obligation and responsibility for the well-being of its employees. Moreover, given that no other alternatives were presented, the use of scrip, in lieu of cash wages, was surely better than not receiving either.⁷⁹
The effects of the depression lingered for fifteen years impacting the industrial development of the entire state, with only two small railroad developments—a short line north of Wheeling and a narrow gauge from Weston to Clarksburg completed between 1873 and 1881. During the fifteen year period the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad fell into the hands of receivers twice. Because of continuing financial difficulties, Huntington stopped his line at the Ohio River for some years unable to connect to his western and mid-western holdings. In fact, “at the end of the fiscal year 1874-5, two years after the opening of the road to the Ohio River,” the debt load had ballooned to more than 31 million dollars. By 1878, “other expenses and accumulating interest” had contributed to a debt load of more than 35 million dollars. That same year, the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad went into receivership and was renamed the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway. By then, the Huntington C & O Shops included “an engine house designed for 42 locomotives, a smith shop, four machine and car shops, a foundry, and a passenger house.” As Huntington raised the needed capital and tried to fight off financial difficulties throughout the late-1870s and early 1880s, construction of his railroad proceeded, albeit in fits and starts. In fact, in 1885, the C & O owed the state of West Virginia $193,000 in back taxes. In 1888 Huntington lost control of the railroad to the J. P. Morgan and Cornelius Vanderbilt interests.

The depression also impacted industries affiliated with the railroad. One employer, referenced only as an “establishment in West Virginia” by the U. S. Census, helps provide perspective. For example, owing to the effects of the depression, employees of a railroad car wheel and iron castings company worked
only eight months out of the year from 1873 to 1875. While the employees benefitted from the implementation of an eleven month schedule in 1876, they also endured a reduction in their pay. Despite the reduction in the cost of their labor in manufacturing car-wheels, from $.75 in 1875 to $.65 in 1880, and from $14 in 1875 to $10 for 1880 in the production of castings, the pay for common laborers dropped from $1.50 a day in 1875 to $1.25 in 1876, remaining at this level through 1880.86

Despite Huntington’s ongoing difficulties with financial stability, of great import to black migrant influx were the prospects of regular wages, fringe benefits, and long-term employment offered by the railroad. Stephen D. Engle notes, “The economic opportunities of working on the railroad, or in the salt or timber industry, was perhaps more important to blacks than taking an active political role.”87

“Throughout the South, the wages offered able-bodied male “cotton-hands” ranged from eighteen to twenty-five dollars a month, and the planters provided shelter and rations. At the same time, the wages paid railroad laborers ranged from $1.50 to $1.75 a day, and the contractors provided shelter. In addition, transportation was invariably advanced, and in some instances, furnished free of charge.”88 Railroad laborers performed a number of tasks. Ben Brown, born a slave in Grayson County, Virginia, remarked, “After wanderin’ about doin work where I could get it [,] I got a job on the C an O Railroad workin’ on de tracks.”89 Nelson Barnett was one of the first black men to acquire employment with the C & O Railroad, attaining a position of foreman in the section from White Sulphur Springs (West Virginia) to Huntington before he was ordained.90 Barnett’s great grandson, Nelson Barnett Jr., citing oral tradition within the family, believes that the elder actually met and
established some type of relationship with C. P. Huntington which assisted his eventual employment. Nell Radford Francisco, a 1911 graduate of Huntington’s black Douglass High, says of her father, William “Anderson” Radford, “I don’t know about father driving spikes, or laying rails, but he sure cleared the bushes so the C & O shops could be built.” Bessie Woodson Yancey, sister of Carter G. Woodson, and a 1901 graduate of Douglass, wrote, “From 1870 to 1874… father worked as a laborer in constructing the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad through the center of this state and served this company later as a worker in its shops in Huntington.” Not only did black men obtain jobs with the railroad, some obtained formal authority. After working for the C & O on the White Sulphur Springs extension connecting the Big Bend Tunnel near Talcott, West Virginia, transplanted Youngstown, Ohio, resident Charles H. Anderson recalled, “I worked on the railroad, bossin’. Always had men under me.” Blacks served in various capacities, from laborers, to runners, to servers. George Selden Wallace states, “There was no dining room at Gordonsville, [Virginia], but negro women carrying on their heads tin trays loaded with chicken sandwiches, met every train and sold snacks to hungry passengers.”

In effect, black migrants seeking to improve their lives by negotiating and navigating through what Joe W. Trotter, Jr., calls “the dynamics of industrial capitalism,” transformed the industrial labor force of southern West Virginia. Some of this transformation resulted from changes in the population itself. While the population of the state increased by the rate of 17 per cent in the 1860s, in the decade of the 1870s the population rose by nearly 40 per cent. In the six counties
contiguous to the C & O line, the number of residents grew by more than 59 per cent from 1870 to 1880. The increase of black residents in these counties rose by more than 89 per cent in the decade. They helped to initiated what some scholars have labeled proletarianization, a conceptual process emphasizing the duality of black working class experience in which gainful industrial employment is achieved but upward occupational mobility severely constrained. In 1870, during the initial stages of construction in the New River Valley, little industrially related opportunity existed inside of Cabell County as evidenced by the fact that only two black residents were listed as railroad employees.

Within a decade of completion of the C & O west to Cincinnati, the Norfolk and Western Railroad (N & W), with lines to the southwest of the C & O line, linked the fields of southern West Virginia and southwestern Virginia to Norfolk and eventually along the Guyandotte River Valley to the Great Lakes. Many of the railroad workers were section hands, who helped advance the railroad in sections through the wilderness, by performing the needed manual labor. Addressing the work camps in Logan County, after the formation of the N & W, Edward A. Cubby notes, “The work camps of the railroad gangs were of the most primitive type. They provided the workers with food and shelter, but nothing more. They were, in effect slums in the wilderness. Typhoid and dysentery plagued the men, a fact implied by an 1890 report that the ‘negro laborers on the line of the West Virginia and Ironton R. R. in this county are dying off.’”

The camps were also rife with crime. In the late 1890s, before obtaining work with the C & O in Russell, Kentucky, John Barnett shot and killed one of the four
men attempting to rob him after a poker game at a Louisville and Norfolk railroad camp in Lewisburg, Tennessee. After only “a couple of months in jail,” Barnett was released, he said, “because he [the dead man] was a bad character and that camp had a bad name. Every man that would go in that camp and win that money, they would rob him.”100 Because of the arduous and hazardous nature of their job, and their status as temporary laborers, many black workers chose to remain behind in the villages and towns that dotted the railroad lines instead of moving on. While some settled down and became invested in their new community, a significant number decided to move on to seek opportunities that granted more permanent, expansive options. Many of them traveled to Huntington.

A local newspaper article encapsulates the above observations. Entitled “Dreaming of Days on the Tad-pole,” it chronicles the exploits and accomplishments of a black railroad worker in southwest West Virginia. While it may be facetious, it does help to illuminate the occupational constraints of railroad employment, as well as the ways Huntington served, for him and many black laborers, as a crucible for the intersection of labor, life, and lost dreams.

Charles Johnson is a Black man who visited town today… He received his education on the top of a boxcar, where he finally rose to the position of flagman on the Norfolk and Western Railroad. While holding down this job he came into possession of a railroad watch and finally he married and settled down to a life of ease and comfort on the easy street in Ceredo. Matrimony, Johnson now opines, is very much like railroading—the line is strewn with wrecks. Never in all his experience has he had rougher traveling than since the parson [sic] said “All aboard” and he and Martha Ann started down the main line. Once they ran into a mother-in-law; another time the train was held up by several friends of the family, and finally
one night when Johnson slept quietly in his bunk dreaming of going round the curves on the
“Tad Pole” division and dashing on through the Dingess tunnel and on to the valley of Tug,
Martha Ann disregarded the rules altogether and when he awoke from his slumbers his wife
was missing and that was not all, his watch had gone with her. He was here today looking for
his wife, or rather his watch.101

Thought the particulars may have differed, countless industrial workers surely
experienced similar travails to Johnson. For scores, with effort and time, prospects
improved and they settled down. But for many life on the railroad made
assimilation problematic. In effect, both the railroad workers’ status and mobility
hindered their integration and contribution to their new community.

Importantly, assisted by a large number of black workers, the N & W later
connected the “Billion Dollar” Pocahontas Field to national markets. The two
railroads, with their web of main lines, branch lines, and feeder lines, combined to
connect the countless coalmines and coke ovens that began to dot the region. By the
end of the nineteenth century, at least four major geographically interlocking
coalfields had been discovered in West Virginia. The Kanawha and New River
Field, the Winding Gulf Field, the Williamson-Logan Field, and the Pocahontas
Field, which employed 100,000 miners by the early 1900s.102 Affiliated with these
developments were the formation of towns and cities along the rail lines, including
Bramwell, Beckley, Keystone, Welch, Williamson, Kenova (located less than ten
miles west of Huntington), and the most important, Bluefield, known as “gateway
to the Pocahontas coal field,” which mirrored Huntington’s impressive growth
during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century.103 Before arriving into
Huntington in 1895, brothers Carter and Robert Woodson worked on the railroad, then in the coal mines of Fayette County.\textsuperscript{104}

Employment options in Huntington did not parallel, entirely, developments in the region. Notwithstanding the rise of the C & O and King Coal during the latter part of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, as alluded to earlier, in the 1870s, agriculture still dominated Huntington’s local economy. Though John Shaver, James Johnson, and Elijah Tucker were self-employed black farmers, the vast majority of black males within Cabell County worked on white owned farms, as they had in the 1860s. Eighteen males (69\%) worked as farm workers. There were some who worked outside of the farm. Anderson Nelson worked as a drayman. Virginian migrant Lewis Marshall worked as a barber. Davis Wyett worked as a laborer, and two men, James Boice and William Coalman (note the spelling of the last name), worked on the railroad. The above represents the entirety of occupational range for black males within the county in 1870.\textsuperscript{105} In total, black Huntington’s male employees were distributed in the following occupations: eighteen farm workers, five farmers, two railroad laborers, two laborers, one drayman and one barber (see Appendix I).

Given the era and place, mirroring the low level of gainfully employed women in the state, it is not surprising that the occupational range for the county’s thirty-four black females in 1870 was even more limited.\textsuperscript{106} Thirteen females (38\%) are cited as domestics, five (15\%) are cited as remaining “at home,” while sixteen (47\%) are cited as house keepers (see Appendix 3). In 1880, of the city’s 130 black female workers forty are domestics (31\%), and seventy-six (58\%--an increase of 11\% over county totals) cite “keeping house” or “keeper of house.”\textsuperscript{107} Both
Virginian and widower Millie Hopkins, and single, twenty-four-year-old, West
Virginian Jane Kelly, were employed as washerwomen.\textsuperscript{108} And, both Maggie
Watson, daughter of Virginia migrant and widower Caroline King, and Ohioan
Belle Perkins, thirty-four, wife of Virginian Robert Perkins, were listed as
“laborers.”\textsuperscript{109}

The 1880 census cites no black female dressmakers, hairdressers, laundresses,
cooks or nurses. The lack of occupational diversity among these women only serves
to highlight their importance in establishing and maintaining households in the pre-
industrial economy. With limited employment options, women supported
themselves, their families, and communities in important and vital ways. Household
duties and childrearing responsibilities provided the emotional, psychological and
social stability needed to sustain and maintain a fledging home. Sewing, cooking,
cleaning, retrieving water, child rearing, supervision, feeding, and shopping were
some of the routine chores. In truth, women performed immense quantities of
indispensable labor. In such an environment, household maintenance and family
stability occupied much of their time and energy. Further, as one scholar states,
“Besides, gainful employment hardly presented an appealing alternative. Women’s
occupational options were few. The pay was paltry. Women were not generally
allowed to work in the same jobs as men....Feminists in our own time try to combat
the trivialization of housewifery, insisting that housework and child care are
critically important forms of work, and they point out that for most women,
participation in the paid labor force is less than liberating phenomenon. Our society
still resists these truths. In the nineteenth century, they were easier to believe.”\textsuperscript{110}
Huntington’s African American women had few alternatives. Like many of the town’s white women, a number of black women were illiterate, including three (save for Belle Perkins) of the four named above. Although fifty-three were illiterate, the percentage (40) compared favorably to the white rate of thirty-two percent, a figure not including the considerable number of those deficient in either reading or writing. Moreover, mutual aid organizations such as Daughters of Friendship, the Sisters of Love, or the Daughters of Liberty to assist and support had yet to be established even in 1880 in the city, and were years away. In the event of conflicts (disagreements over wages and length of work day were common for the era), there were no mechanisms in place to re-negotiate terms or gain redress with an employer. Yet, despite the barriers and constraints, employment within early Huntington offered a greater sense of control than that offered in rural areas with light industry, greater poverty, economic stratification, and little demand for agricultural labor.

Between the 1870s and 1880s, Huntington’s economy broadened. The Jasper family, who traveled from Albemarle County, Virginia, in the late 1870s where they had been owned by several aristocratic families, was involved in several ventures. The family patriarch, “Grandpa” Jackson Jasper, worked at the Eighth Street stables, where prominent Huntington doctors J. O. Wall and E. S. Buffington kept their horses. His son, the well-regarded James Murray Jasper, drove a dray, transporting freight from the Ohio River wharf to the C & O Railroad. Rev. A. D. Lewis, who drove the first express wagon in the city of Huntington for Adams
Express, relays that, “Christian washerwomen paid draymen twenty-five cents a barrel for Ohio river drinking water.”

Beyond to the two women cited above, there is some evidence of a nascent African American entrepreneurial class. While Huntington’s economy produced jobs and optimism, it also shaped black response from those largely locked out of broader access to upward occupational mobility. Restricted to the bottom of the economic ladder, and dependent upon white patronage, black laborers’ progress was largely dependent on effective and vigorous action that evolved and adapted to generate positive change. The aforementioned Dandridge Hill began his career as a railroad porter for the C & O before opening a grocery and restaurant business on Ninth Street. He also was one of the first to cart drinking water to Huntington residents prior to the installation of water works by the Huntington Water Company in 1887. William O. James was one of the first black residents and a prosperous agrarian who farmed a large tract of land south of the C & O tracks and west of Eighth Street. James possessed numerous skills. He briefly served as teacher of the first black school. A cement contractor who laid many of the early sidewalks in Huntington, he assisted in the formation of the town’s first Baptist church. From a downtown location, he operated a number of horse teams that saw continuous use due to the construction boom of the 1870s and 1880s. In addition to his work as a laborer, Tom Wilkins ran a soup house at the C. & O. Shops “for the clerks, office force, and foreman.” So popular was the restaurant it was said he “always had a waiting list.”
By 1880, there was still little occupational diversity, with 90 percent of Huntington workers employed in three categories, unskilled (77%), service (17%), and semi-skilled (4%) (see Appendix 5). Huntington’s black male inhabitants worked on steamers, in kitchens, stores, hotels, and stables. Blacks, however, worked in twenty-three separate occupations, from laborer to cigar maker to hostler. It is noteworthy that mulatto Henry Dorton, the town’s only black fireman (the person who fed coal into the train’s firebox), was married to Elizabeth, a white woman, indicating some tolerance during the era of such arrangements. In contrast, black laborer Harrison Ford was indicted in early 1875 for “lewd and lascivious cohabitation” in marrying white Anna Ford, and each fined $50 and court costs.¹¹⁴

Not surprisingly unskilled laborers comprised the largest percentage of the black work force in 1880, totaling one hundred and thirty-one workers, or nearly 67% of the employed adult black male population. These numbers reveal how important black laborers were to Huntington’s development and illuminate the shift from agriculturally-based occupations. In comparison to 1870 when twenty-three African Americans cited their occupation as farmer or farm worker, only six cited the same occupation in 1880, representing an even smaller proportion of the black population. Now employed as a foundry worker, thirty-one-year old William Black was emblematic of another profound shift experienced by many of the county’s black residents: from slave to wage-earner. By 1880 twenty-one blacks (11%) were employed in the railroad industry, a substantive increase from the two employed in 1870. Expanding the base to include the county’s 342 wage-earning African American males between the ages of fourteen and seventy-five shows fully 158
(46%) were employed as “railroad worker” or “works on railroad,” further demonstrating the growing pull of railroad employment in the county. Moreover, west of Cabell in adjacent Wayne County, 45 black laborers, 43 of them Virginia-born, worked on the railroad in 1880. Out of a total population of 219 blacks and mulattoes, the 45 represented 21% of the county’s total black population.

No matter where employed on the C & O, Huntington’s black laborers performed the most dangerous and arduous work. This was the same within the Shops. One white former employee stated, “When I started in the machine shop, everything in the shops had to be done manually. We didn’t have a crane that would lift the locomotive. We had to jack up an engine and run the wheels under them. Took us all day to jack up an engine and the wheels were only four feet high.”

Denied the more important positions of engineer, fireman, and conductor, African Americans worked as unskilled laborers, brakemen, switchmen (these two were frequently combined into a single job), or yardmen. Laborers performed the menial, labor-intensive, and physically exhausting jobs. From transporting timber, to laying tracks, to hammering railroad ties and clearing underbrush, laborers performed the thankless work necessary for railroad construction to advance and the railroad to operate. As brakemen, they manually operated the brake on a rail car before the advent of the airbrake. Each man used a brake club, similar to a small baseball bat, inserted into a brake staff, and then twisted it to make the hand brake stop the wheels through the friction created. It was a difficult, dangerous job made more so by the hills and valleys of the West Virginia countryside. Switchmen were those workers responsible for assembling trains and switching railroad cars in a yard, a
hazardous task given the size of some yards, the number of trains involved, and the time afforded to perform the job. Elaborating on the dangerous job the brakeman/switchman performed, one former worker recalled,

The early railroads was individual cars, individual brakes, wooden under frames, very little steel was used. The connection between two cars was called the link and pin. It was a large metal link oblong about two inches in diameter and a pin for each car. The brakeman in those days as the engine would push the cars would insert this link. It fit into a slot which had two holes, top and bottom and as the link was inserted and the pin was dropped. That was one of the ways that the railroads hired their employees looking at their hands. So often many of the brakemen had fingers missing, parts of fingers missing from using this connection. 119

As yardmen, black laborers roamed the “yard,” the area in which trains were housed, switched, maintained, loaded and off-loaded. Depending on the size of the yard, the number of men actually working it, and the extent of work to be done, a yardman’s job could be exceedingly difficult and dangerous. Navigating the rails and ties, weaving between individual cars or trains, and lifting and/or carrying freight could prove draining for even the most physically fit, especially for those who had to cover for someone else who had called off (a chronic problem). It could also involve extended stretches of inactivity. Many injuries in the yard occurred because of worker’s inattention during slow periods. While stretching the point a little, it might be difficult to say which state proved more dangerous to the worker: work or boredom.

As numerous scholars have illuminated, labor unrest within southern West Virginia during the early-twentieth-century was commonplace and frequently
violent. While examples of biracial cooperation existed, black migrant influx contributed to ongoing racial and labor hostilities in the region. Arriving primarily from Virginia, Maryland, and Ohio, with smaller numbers from Kentucky, North Carolina, and South Carolina, the state’s black population increased from almost 4,800 in 1880 in the southern counties to over 40,000 in 1910. Increasing relocation from northern black migrants, mostly from the Pennsylvania coalfields, also contributed to the population increase in the southern counties.120 Joe W. Trotter states, “Only about 21 percent of the state’s blacks lived in the southern counties in 1880; by 1910, that figure had climbed to 63 percent.”121 Notably, “The increase [in black migration] in the Southern counties and practically throughout the state was by in-migration” until significantly impacted by natural increase in the 1920s.122 With 6 percent of the total in 1880, by 1910 black residents comprised nearly 14 percent, more than twice the number and percentage that were immigrants.123

In conjunction with black influx was the arrival of the thousands of native whites and European immigrants into southern West Virginia. The region’s immigrant population, mostly from southern, central, and Eastern Europe grew from only 1,400 in 1880 to around 18,000 in 1910, increasing from less than 2 percent of the total population in 1880 to 6 percent in 1910. In total, southern West Virginia’s population increased from about eighty thousand in 1880 to nearly three hundred thousand in 1910. So extensive was migration into the coalfields that between 1890 and 1910 West Virginia was the only southern state to increase in population. Drawn by favorable economic conditions, migrant influx transformed the southern coalfield region into a “contested zone” of social tension and labor
strife as native whites, European immigrants, and African Americans competed for jobs, housing, and autonomy.  

The expansion and diversification of the work force did not always go smoothly. Work stoppages during the late-nineteenth century, as illustrated by the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 (initiated in Martinsburg, West Virginia), often escalated into violence. Keith Dix provides some perspective on labor unrest during this era when he notes, “The first attempt by the federal government to measure industrial work stoppages on a systematic basis came in 1880 when questions relating to industrial disputes were included in the Tenth U.S. Census survey. In that year, twenty-two work stoppages were reported in West Virginia, placing the state eighth from the top in a ranking of all states. Between 1881 and 1905, the U.S. Department of Labor assumed the responsibility for gathering more detailed work stoppage statistics. West Virginia experienced 304 work stoppages in the period from 1881-1905, ranking twenty-second among all the states. The state ranked tenth from the top, however, in the number of workers involved in work stoppages.”

Given the above statistics, it should not be surprising that local worker dissatisfaction existed even in Huntington. In one incident, workers struck Ensign Manufacturing Car Works. Located between First and Third avenues and Twenty-Third and Twenty-Fourth streets, contiguous to the C & O line, Ensign was one of Huntington’s largest employers. Formed in 1872 by Connecticut natives William H. Barnum and Eli (Ely) Ensign, with the financial backing of Collis P. Huntington, the company became a major producer of railroad car wheels and iron castings by
the mid-1870s. Within a decade of its formation, the company began producing wooden railroad freight cars. By the early 1890s Ensign had become one of the largest railroad car builders in the nation, selling its cars to the Chesapeake and Ohio, Southern Pacific, and Central Pacific railroads. In June 1886 “eighty workers in the erecting shop of Ensign Works went out on strike” in a dispute over wages and contractual obligations. After a half-day absence, a compromise was reached which largely benefited the workers. All returned to work, save for the eight leaders of the strike, who were fired. In 1898, workers at the plant struck again, seeking a raise of four dollars in the rate of pay for each car completed. Though the race of the participants are not identified, given their status as common laborers, the lack of a formal black labor organization or leadership cadre, and the absence of white overtures for interracial labor reform, it is hard to imagine black involvement in the strike.

Black men were, however, involved in early black labor activism. In his quest to establish interracial trade unionism within the Hocking River Valley, the Ohio Valley, and the New River Valley, black coal miner Richard L. Davis, who, twice won election to the National Executive Board of the United Mine Workers in the mid-1890s, frequently experienced mistrust and hostility from black residents and fellow black coal miners. At the age of seventeen, Davis worked as a coal miner in the Kanawha and New River regions, before moving to Rendville, Ohio (southeast of Columbus in the Hocking Valley), in 1882. Here he spent the bulk of his life, interspersed with extensive organizational and recruiting sojourns to the coalfields, until his death in 1900. Interestingly, Davis’s attempts to straddle the line of racial
friction and ethnic mistrust in the Central Appalachia coalfields produced animosity from both whites and blacks. Negro critics in Rendville, angry at his call for cooperation with local whites (a position they perceived antithetical to their best interests), called him a “traitor,” and promised not to re-elect him to the local union office.\textsuperscript{130} Traveling through the New River region in 1892, Davis wrote, “[T]he whites say they are afraid of the colored men and the colored men say they are afraid of the whites.”\textsuperscript{131} In 1896, after he and another miner were both blamed for organizing a strike to restore a wage scale, and both forced into unemployment, he responded, “Just how they could stoop so low I am unable to tell, and some of them, if not all, call themselves Christians or children of the most high God, but in reality they are children of his satanic majesty.”\textsuperscript{132}

Herbert Gutman’s explanation of the forces working against the formation of interracial labor organizations in the coalfields illuminates the nature of Huntington’s labor situation in the mid-1890s.

Widespread belief in Negro racial inferiority, itself the continuing influence of the historic master-slave relationship, together with the rapid general deterioration of the Negro’s social and political status in the 1890s, explained some of the obstacles faced by white and Negro trade unionists. The Southern rural background of most Negroes laboring in the late nineteenth-century and mining complicated the difficulty. Education was limited for Negroes in the rural South, and deference and dependence more normal in the rural than urban environment. Although little is known of the early Negro miners, it is possible that their aspirations differed from those of native white workers. They may have viewed their status as workers as a temporary one. In parts of West Virginia, for example, North Carolina, and Virginia Negro farmers worked as miners only in the winter months to accrue income to pay
farm mortgages. To such workers, unions often seemed unnecessary. Viewing their industrial work as a means to another way of life, they must have thought the danger of union affiliation unnecessarily risky.\textsuperscript{133}

Although there are examples of racial animosities and violence between working class blacks and whites in Huntington, none seem linked to the workplace. There is also no evidence of black initiated strikes or work actions, or the development of a black working class-reform movement. This is especially important given the establishment of a local affiliate of the Locomotive Engineers in the city in 1878, and the Norfolk and Western Railroad’s policy in Bluefield of offering blacks shop-level management positions, a practice not followed by the C & O in Huntington.\textsuperscript{134} Unlike the formation of the Colored National Labor Union in Reconstruction Richmond, which sought labor reform as a hedge against growing dissatisfaction with the Republican Party, there was no such organization within Huntington. Further, there is no evidence of interracial working-class activism within the city which might have created an effective vehicle for change like the United Mine Workers in the southern West Virginia coalfields, or The Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor, which produced impressive though short-lived results in Richmond and in southeastern Ohio.\textsuperscript{135}

That Huntington’s white unskilled workers failed to act upon the commonalities of their circumstance with black laborers is important. Discussing Huntington’s white class structure, Professor J.W. Scott illuminates the forces arrayed against black and inter-racial labor agitation:
Roughly speaking, the whites may be divided into five classes: 1. The capital, or moneyed class. 2. The professional class. 3. The merchant class. 4. The skilled-labor class. 5. The common labor class. From the beginning the white population embraced all these classes and each class since then has been growing in power and influence. Labor has its unions, merchants have their Chamber of Commerce, the professions have their various associations, trusts, and banks. Thus the whole social structure of the white population stands like a pyramid—solid, compact, and self-sustaining.\textsuperscript{136}

Scott’s observations suggest that workplace constraints, exploitation, and instability never reached a level which compelled white workers to abandon the social hierarchy and their racial identification, and choose, on a large level, “new relationships of equality with their black counterparts,” as had been done successfully in Richmond.\textsuperscript{137}

As Herbert Gutman noted generally, about black workers in urban areas, it is not so easy to determine the detail of the life of urban working-class blacks and “their community life and collective aspirations as well as their interaction with white workers and employers” within Huntington.\textsuperscript{138} If covered at all by local newspapers, coverage touted the benefits and promise of industry, not the plight of the worker, and certainly not that of the black worker. Some insight is gained, however, from other early sources. White settler Chas. R. Wilson’s description of black migrant and river yard switchman Jim Mangrum (\textit{sic}), who, “never went out of his way, other than he had outlined in the morning and if’ he was told to give you a switch, it was after Jim got good and ready.” Further depicted by Wilson as “a good switchman and intelligent, but somewhat peculiar,” Mangrum’s stubbornness importantly suggests the prevalence of individual acts of resistance rather than
collective (union) activities. Another local authority relays a similar example. During regular runs, a brakeman on the Virginia Central Railroad regularly deflected responsibility for failure to obey the engineer’s order to brake, by asking “whar was you?” in response to the engineer’s inquiry as to why the brake had not been used. However, upon gaining knowledge that important men were aboard, the brakeman feigned responsibility by always answering, “I was right thar,” in response to the engineer’s question.

Irrespective of the individual ways black workers resisted, analysis of Huntington’s black workers suggest that some responsibility for the absence of working-class agitation or union formation, black or inter-racially led, belongs with them. By 1882, a branch of the Colored Masonry had existed for ten years in Portsmouth, Ohio, providing, at the least, a model to emulate, and at the best, a resource to call upon. By 1898, a branch of the Colored Waiters’ Alliance was in full swing in Cincinnati. That no black labor leader emerged from Huntington’s black working class during the city’s early years is suggestive, and calls into question the nature of black agency and “black community.” Moreover, the city’s black religious leaders demonstrated no articulated formal support on behalf of the black working class, nor any political action to address their conditions. This is noteworthy given that in 1890 the western division of Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, based in Huntington, employed 1,109 employees in various capacities. Some suggestion of the occupational constraints imposed upon the company’s black workers is shown by the fact that from 1871 to 1900 no African Americans are among the forty-two workers listed in the C. & O’s Engineers and Fireman’s Age
Roster of the Huntington Division.\textsuperscript{144} Nor, are any among the seven cited in the Conductors and Brakeman seniority list of the Huntington Division covering the same time period.\textsuperscript{145}

There is little data to support the contention that black Huntington experienced a process of proletarianization during the late-nineteenth century. Earl Lewis’ study of Norfolk, Virginia, is instructive. Lewis concluded the city’s black workers largely failed to “manifest a semblance of worker consciousness” because their “consciousness was so embedded in the perspective of race that neither blacks nor whites saw themselves as equal partners in the same labor movement.”\textsuperscript{146}

 Estranged from white workers, blocked by white management, and disdained by a small but growing class of black leaders, black workers found no incentive to leave the psychic refuge of race as the prime modality of consciousness. In light of this development, one largely reflected nationwide, one authority suggested, “Both the decline in the political fortunes and the failure to achieve unity with white working classes forced Negroes to turn their greatest efforts toward achieving wealth and middle-class respectability by their own efforts.”\textsuperscript{147}

There were other models for black workers to emulate to address their plight: To the south, in the State’s southern coal mining region, historian Stephen Brier’s examination of the growth of the Knights and the early UMW between 1880 and 1894 demonstrated early interracial unionism could be achieved. “Perhaps the most striking aspect of this episode in American working class history,” he contended, “is the fact that Southern West Virginia black miners, many recently migrated from the cities and farms of Eastern Virginia, came to view interracial union organization
as the vehicle through which they could fight for their liberation both as workers and as black people. To the immediate north, Gutman’s examination of the letters of black coal miner and UMW labor leader Richard L. Davis revealed an equally unusual dynamic for the time. Throughout the rural-industrial coal mining region of southeastern Ohio, just across the Ohio River from West Virginia, Davis and other black miners compelled interracial agitation in local miners’ unions, independent of or affiliated with the Knights of Labor, to achieve notable gains benefiting black workers.

Despite the sustained growth of labor unions in the state during the latter part of the nineteenth century, the absence of interracial union agitation within Huntington is noteworthy. For instance, six local unions were formed in the state in the 1870s, twenty-six in the 1880s, and fifty-four in the 1890s. Comparison of industrial and union development in Wheeling to that in Huntington helps provide context to this growth. In the quest to correct and improve working conditions and better organize the often diffused and confused nature of labor agitation by the Wheeling’s unions and assemblies, a central labor union was created in the city. Formed in the early-1880s, and called the Ohio Valley Trades and Labor Assembly, the organization contained female and black members; one, Gerald Jackson, was elected an officer in the Assembly in 1893, and was still a member in 1910. The Assembly embraced various methodologies to address disputes between labor and management, including arbitration, demonstration, boycotts, and when these failed, the strike. At the end of the nineteenth century, Wheeling was the state’s largest manufacturing site, containing four hundred manufacturing interests, employing
over seven thousand workers (in comparison, Huntington possessed eighty-nine manufacturing interests, employing roughly 1,860 workers. Of the state’s ten thousand union members in 1902, Wheeling contained forty-two of the state’s fifty-two locals, comprising four thousand members, while Huntington, the state’s second largest labor center, possessed fourteen locals and less than seven hundred wage earners.

Gainful wage-labor employment, the solace of family, community, and social freedom, and the explicit threat of replacement labor sufficiently outweighed the negative aspects of constrained employment, thus providing a disincentive for militant labor agitation. Reverend Cecil Hill, who was white and who went to work for the C & O as a boy of fifteen, noted, “We worked six days a week, 10 hours a day. I made $2.50 for 10 hours work.” Many of the Shop’s unskilled black workers garnered comparable or worse wages. Located at the bottom of the occupational ladder, they remained vulnerable to the dictates of the marketplace and discrimination. In fact, one local authority reports that many of C & O’s laid off white skilled laborers were able to find work constructing the city’s first underpass beneath the railroad tracks at Sixteenth Street, a job denied to blacks. In another instance of employment rather than dismissal, blacks fared only minimally better when all white workers from “the yard,” one of the most grueling and dangerous areas in the railroad industry, were replaced by black laborers.

Another perspective is provided by the constricted nature of urban-industrial work offered by the C & O Shops and Ensign Manufacturing, Huntington’s largest employers of black workers during the late-nineteenth century. While supplying
decent wages and stable working conditions for its black employees, the city lacked a variety of large employers which might have, through competitive forces, provided opportunities for blacks to exploit. Further, alternative employment options in government, trade unions, or business were blocked. Commenting on black job availability within the city, Nell Radford Francisco notes of the C & O Shops, “It was the only job.” Speaking on black Appalachian workers, one scholar provides important perspective by noting, “Most, if not all blacks, probably agreed with [Booker T.] Washington’s assertion that the true friends of Black workers were the capitalists who supplied them with jobs, rather than the union which excluded him.” Thus, prevailing economic realities within the city cannot be ruled out as a contributing, perhaps even primary, reason for the absence of concerted black worker activism.

Some evidence for this contention is supported by the longevity of some workers and the intergenerational quality of black employment with the C & O. Marcellus Turner migrated from Charlottesville, Virginia, area at the age of 13 and obtained a position as water boy in the Huntington division in 1880. He served the railroad in various capacities and locales for more than fifty years. John Henry Banks, or “Banks,” as he was known to all those in the Huntington and Hinton division, migrated in 1889 at the age of sixteen from Charlottesville, and served many years with the railroad as a section laborer, and later train porter in Huntington. One writer commented on his dependability: “So seldom is he absent from duty, he is known better for his steady, attentive and dependable service.” Yet neither of these men, nor many others for that matter, could top the legacy of
Pat Jackson. Born in 1849, Jackson initially obtained employment with the railroad in Clifton Forge, Virginia, as a laborer in 1869, before transferring to Huntington in 1880 for a short stint. The next year he transferred to Ashland, Kentucky, serving as a laborer in various departments there for the remainder of his employment. Upon being “presented his fifty-year service pin, and on receiving notice of his pension, his eyes sparkled with happiness. A loyal and faithful worker was receiving his notification.” By the time he retired in 1930, at the age of 81, Jackson had served sixty years with the railroad.163 Before migration to Huntington, Reverend Albert D. Lewis “followed construction and railroad work, first laboring out of Baltimore building a tunnel and then working for the C & O at Richmond for about six years. I went to Kentucky to do grading for the L. & N. [Louisville and Northern] Railroad and then back to Richmond with the C. & O.”164

Examination of the Barnes’ family history reveals that after migrating from Alabama, U.L. Barnes, Sr., started employment with the C & O in the late-1890s. By the time his grandson U. L. Barnes, III, “Bud,” retired in 1998, the three generations of Barnes’ comprised a remarkable 117 years of employment with the C & O Shops.165 By 1900, William “Anderson” Radford was a twenty-year veteran with the C & O, and had assumed a supervisory position of “odds and ends” about the Shops. Each of his three sons also worked in the Shops.166 While it is difficult to imagine any family bettering these examples, surely many sons (and perhaps, sons of sons) followed their fathers into the crucible of urban-industrial employment mindful that their working lives, no matter how difficult, were an improvement over that of the previous generation.
Ostracized and trapped at the bottom of the occupational ladder, prevailing circumstances compelled a level of thoughtfulness and appraisal among black common laborers, understandably producing a heightened level of conservatism among the black masses. As Scott accurately noted of the city’s black laborers, “They could do no skilled work, and they had no knowledge of business.”\textsuperscript{167} Thus, black migrants’ ability to address workplace constraints and formulate effective strategies and/or tactics was severely limited. Yet importantly, the economic gains were made.

The employment of black people from across the river in Huntington, which probably contributed to a larger black workforce than cited in census figures, reflected this reality. Blacks living in Proctorville, Burlington, South Point, and Buffalo Creek, Ohio, among other towns, traveled to Huntington to work. William Radford traveled back and forth from Proctorville in a skiff made with fellow workers and bosses to his job at the C & O shops.\textsuperscript{168} Mrs. Beatrice Vinson Connally of Buffalo Creek indicated that her father, Frank Vinson, who died in 1917, “carried hod” to Huntington during its early years. Likewise, noted local black historian Mrs. Edna Duckworth stated that her father, Rush Smith, followed the same routine before eventually moving to Huntington. By 1910, both William and James, his thirty-one-year-old first-born son, worked as urban-industrial workers; the former as carpenter, the latter as laborer. Teacher Theodore Wilson, son of former Cabell County slave, George Wilson, relocated numerous times from Ohio to Huntington and back again throughout his working life, a story more fully examined in Chapter 4.\textsuperscript{169} These examples illustrate the draw of Huntington’s industrial wage economy.
to black workers’ desire to acquire either primary or supplemental income, and provide further insight into the black social network that existed within the area.

City directories for 1891-2 and 1895-6 city directories reveal continuing occupational expansion for black men and women (see Appendix 8 & 9). While unskilled workers again constituted the bulk of black male workers, occupational diversity now comprised thirty-one separate occupations (up from twenty-three in 1880) in 1891, including two firsts: the city’s first black professional, Principal William T. McKinney, and the city’s first black contractors, the afore-mentioned William O. James and Dan Hill. These developments contrasted two others: the absence of black farmers and/or farm workers, as well as black workers tied to river commerce. The absence of workers tied to farming illuminates the growing influence of the city’s urban-industrial/commercial employment sector, and a concurrent recognition by black residents of greater opportunities accompanying this shift. It certainly helps to explain James’ shift from “prosperous agrarian” in the 1870s and 1880s, to street paver and contractor in the 1890s.¹⁷⁰

Four key developments are emergent by the mid-1890s. First is the continuing critical nature of unskilled and semi-skilled black labor to the city. In the late 1890’s the C & O’s initiated special trains to bring workers to the shops from other areas in the city. As one white city resident recalls, “Every morning a shop train was run from 16th street, where a community of black people live, to the shops at 27th Street. The men would climb in, sit down, and ride to the shops and be brought back home after work.”¹⁷¹ Second, some measure of occupational mobility existed as workers departed old jobs to acquire new ones, albeit overwhelmingly within the
same class. Though constrained to the bottom of the occupational ladder, greater opportunities afforded many men lateral and some, upward mobility: Charles Daniels shifted from waiter in 1891 to porter, John Hider from porter to cab line employee, James Shields from waiter to cook, Stephen Baker from laborer to cook, Henry Smith from shoemaker to barber, and John Wells, Charles Meyers, George Scott, and Sumner Glover shifted to laborer from hod carrier, house boy, watchman, and grocer, respectively. Third, the first skilled black workers appeared, represented in 1895 by carpenter William Thomas and plasterers William Byrd and George Phipps. Last, as embodied by Mr. McKinney, the first black professionals arrived, including the city’s first black nurse, Mattie Mitchell.

As suggested by Mitchell’s occupation, occupational diversity for the city’s black women increased during the period from 1880 to 1891, from two to eight fields. While most were confined to some type of domestic service, including laundress Mary Carter, one of the earliest black migrants, there were washerwomen, an ironer, a chambermaid, and boarding house proprietress and land owner, Caroline Holley. Notably, absent are black female laborers, suggesting social and occupational gender proscriptions. However, the expanded range of job options suggests some increasing affluence and economic stability among many of Huntington’s black migrant families. For instance, in comparison to the 15% of black women who cited their occupations as “at home” in 1880, fully 67% of black women in the 1891 directory cited theirs as the same. Such a development can be explained by three possible scenarios: the departure of greater numbers of black women from white households due to their own increased household financial
stability, the greater importance of their at-home labor to their own household maintenance, and greater scrutiny on the part of the enumerator. Still, black women’s options were severely limited. In general, locked out of higher level positions—perfectly illustrated by an ad placed by Marshall College (now Marshall University) in 1896 for a white “general work” girl—black women made the best of it and advertised their services as domestics, laundresses, or washerwomen.172

Undoubtedly, many of Huntington’s black women also contributed to the household income in ways hidden from the public record. For instance, mindful that her husband could neither read nor write, Mrs. W.O. James assisted him in running his cement contracting business. Edna Duckworth states, “Each pay day his wife turned her washtub upside down. Then she dealt the proceeds (sic) for the pay period out on the tub until they were exhausted—somewhat like dealing playing cards to each of the workers.”173 Edna’s sister and Covington, Kentucky, resident Mrs. Almedia Duckworth Shelby,

…did everything humanly possible to provide her family with some necessities of life. When she was first married she and her husband did not even have a bed on which to sleep. Their first child was born on the ground floor. From this humble beginning, she and her husband with a mind to attain something of their own, bought and paid for 240 acres of land. This was partly accomplished by Mrs. Shelby driving to town in an ox wagon to pick up clothes to wash, iron and deliver. Bad weather and bad roads were no obstacle. In later years by being thrifty, they were able to buy a car, a T-Model Ford which helped out greatly with the washing and iron[ing].174
Remarkably, Mrs. Shelby accomplished these tasks across a period during which she also gave birth to sixteen children, ten of whom, along with her husband, Caesar Shelby, preceded her in death. Mrs. James’s and Mrs. Shelby’s hard work and industriousness, like that of millions of black women nationwide, were integral to household stability and material gain through the continued viability of varied, and frequently, multiple endeavors. Black women were also crucial in less tangible but no less important ways. Sometimes, their work in the homes of whites and in assisting their husbands afforded them opportunities to gain social knowledge and skills, knowledge they used to inform and navigate their new cultural surroundings. Recalling his life in Danville, Virginia, before relocating to the McDowell County coalfields, Dr. P. A. Williams, explains,

My parents were poor but proud people, and I would say that they evidently were people of very good stock. As I remember my grandparents worked for, my grandmother particularly, worked for the better class of white families there in personal services in what we would call now maids or cook services and I think that through liaisons of this sort they established a type of cultural connection because in so many instances [they] copied the things that were practiced by the better class of people of those communities and of southern families.

The Negro woman in a way got an entrée into southern family and southern culture that has not been superceded even up until this time.

What emerges from Williams’ account is the adaptability and innovative responses of his grandmother to better her circumstance, actions surely followed by large numbers of black domestic workers nationwide. In Huntington, just like those of black men, their strategies and tactics were individual in nature and largely
hidden from the public record, but are important for understanding the collective nature of the city’s black working class and the mechanisms utilized within a racialized, capitalistic, and industrial environment.

But, as the nineteenth century closed, black workers’ circumstance left many overwhelmed and frustrated. In Huntington, with employment came a racist color-caste occupational system that stymied black advancement. What progress they made came through occupational filtering which allowed whites to move up the occupational ladder and many African Americans to come in at the bottom. Organized black working-class response to these developments was non-existent in the late-nineteenth century. There was a no formal voice, organ, or organizational structure to publicize the value of the African American worker to Huntington, or other whites, nor to offer strategies to interrogate and possibly improve the situation. Yet, for the vast majority, the transition to urban-industrial employment entailed some “Progress:” flawed, ugly, but ultimately life-affirming.

Individually and collectively, during the latter part of the nineteenth-century black workers’ labor and agency were critical to the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, the industrialization of southern West Virginia, and the rise of Huntington. Evidence indicates that most of Huntington’s black laboring class, male and female, like black workers nationwide, found gainful employment in Huntington’s emergent industrial capitalist economy. Importantly, as the city grew, black residents benefited from increasing occupational diversity. In the process of performing the most arduous and dangerous jobs, they acquired new skills, autonomy, and authority. In their striving, their success provides a compelling
historical counterpoint to the tragic tale of John Henry. In the intervening years of Big Bend’s construction, social and spiritual progress, and the concomitant development of manhood, while difficult, had been made. Yet, largely unskilled, untrained, and illiterate, Huntington’s first generation of black workers remained locked at the bottom of the occupational ladder and beholden to the dictates of industry, racism, and capitalism. Their failure and/or inability to engage in concerted working class activism or to forge inter-racial alliances with whites to better their position is significant, and illuminates the enduring power of racial identification and class standing as inhibiting factors in the development of a black working class consciousness. Or, it could also reveal that the town’s first generation of black laborers consciously decided to pursue other tactics in the quest to combat their dehumanization and oppression. Both dynamics would fuel the development of Huntington’s black institutions as well as complicate black political aspiration, subjects addressed in the next chapter.


14 “Charles Washington,” Ida Berkeley, Box 20, Number 9, in the Fred B. Lambert Papers (hereafter FBLP), #76, 69, Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV.
15 A.W. (Alex) Hamilton, “Early Recollections of the Beginning and Completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Between White Sulphur Springs and the Ohio River as to the Vicinity in and Around Hawk’s Nest,” 1, Charles Austin Goddard Papers, 1857-1942, Reel C103, Pos.c.1, Mss1G5412a, Manuscript Collection, The Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.
17 Ibid., 2
18 Dealers in government securities, Fisk and Hatch were empowered with the fiduciary responsibility of selling $15,000,000 in thirty year bonds to help finance capitalization and construction of the C & O after its purchase from the Virginia Central Railroad by C. P. Huntington in 1869. The firm went bankrupt in 1873. See Charles Turner, “The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad in Reconstruction, 1865-1873,” The North Carolina Historical Review, Vol. XXXI, No. 1, 1954: 150-72.
20 Ibid.
21 Eller, “Mountain Road,” 49.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 48-9.
24 The Cabell County Press (Guyandotte, WV), May 9, 1870, Box 15, Number 15, FBLP, #76, 9.
25 Louis Chappell provides three reasons for the lack of documentation: 1) geographic inaccessibility at the time of construction, 2) records may have been destroyed in the 1917 fire that struck the C & O headquarters in Richmond, and 3) in the aftermath of the Civil War neither Virginia or West Virginia possessed a great deal of concern for ex-slaves working at Big Bend. See Louis Chappell, John Henry: A Folk-Lore Study (Germany: Walter Biedermann, 1933), 59. Consideration must also be given to the fact that vast numbers of railroad workers were former slaves who were forbidden to read and write, and thus were not literate.
26 Ibid.
27 Decatur Axtell, “A Wedding Journey Over the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway, in February, 1873, as Described by the Bridegroom to his Mother,” History of the Chesapeake and Ohio, Chapter VII (New York: United Press Syndicate, c. 1910), Chesapeake and Ohio Historical Society, Clifton Forge, VA, 14.
29 George Selden Wallace, Huntington Through Seventy-five Years (Huntington, West Virginia: 1947), 77, 79-80. Wallace also reports on C & O board members with Confederate ties: “The first meeting of the stockholders of the new Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad was held on the 26th day of November, 1868. General Williams Carter Wickham defeated Edmund Fontaine for president of the new road... Edmund Fontaine, son of Colonel William Fontaine, was born in 1801 on a farm still called Beaver Dam, a short distance from Beaver Dam Station in Hanover County, Virginia, and was of Huguenot extraction. He had three sons. Two served in the Confederate Army. One, Edmund, was killed in the first Battle of Manassas. Another, John B., was a surgeon on the staff of General J.E. B. Stuart and was killed in the battle of Poplar Springs. Edmund was active in politics and served in the State Senate of Virginia. Williams Carter Wickham was a Confederate Brigadier. He was a member of the Virginia Secession Convention and voted against secession, but when the State seceded, he went with his state and entered the Civil War as the captain of the old Hanover troop.” See p. 80-1. Speaking on Mason, Nelson states, “Mason’s connection to the railroad went back to the 1840s, when it was mostly state owned. He was a self-taught railroad contractor who had first bossed slaves and free
blacks in his coal mines in Chesterfield County, just south of Richmond. As railroads first came to Virginia, he had used slaves and convicts to grade and lay track, earning himself stock in the railroad.” See Nelson, 77.

30 Scott Reynolds Nelson, “Who Was John Henry? Railroad Construction, Southern Folklore, and the Birth of Rock and Roll,” *Other Souths: Diversity and Difference in the U.S. South, Reconstruction to Present*, ed. Pippa Holloway (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2008), 51. Nelson continues, “In the last two years of the Civil War, General Robert E. Lee had given Mason broad orders to hunt deserters in Albemarle County in western Virginia near Charlottesville. Mason had dutifully captured dozens of soldiers absent without leave, as well as those who had given them aid. He then brought them to the nearest town, posted notice of their execution, and hanged them. In the mountains, bitterness toward Mason lasted for decades. A major stockholder in the C&O, Mason’s resume was not a liability for the railroad.”


33 Ibid., 13.


38 Eller, “Mountain Road,” 51.


40 Decatur Axtell, then Vice-President of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, states that in 1868, the railroad’s debt load was $2,418,636. See Axtell, *History of the Chesapeake and Ohio*, Chapter XIII, 1.

41 Nelson relays, “About one third were killed on the railroad, and twenty-four died a few weeks later after they returned from work. The surgeon [hired by the penitentiary] stated that scurvy, dropsy, dysentery, and consumption could mostly be attributed to construction work and tunneling on the C&O.” See Nelson, *Steel Drivin’ Man*, 25.

42 Ibid., 26.

43 George E. Miles continues, “The late Principal of the Salisbury, North Carolina, school, himself a colored man, was always a welcome visitor to Mr. Huntington’s office in New York, and possessed his esteem in a high degree. Mr. Huntington regarded him as one of the brightest negroes he had ever known. One day, while seated in his office, he heard Price’s voice outside, and rising, he threw open the door and called out: ‘Come in, Price. I have given orders to keep out everybody this morning, but you can just walk in at any time.’ ‘Well,’ said Price, with a great laugh, ‘in all my experience this is the first time I was ever put above the level of a white man.’” See George E. Miles, “Personalities, Huntington, C.P.,” *Collis P. Huntington (n.p., c.1897)* Chesapeake and Ohio Historical Society, Clifton Forge, VA, 37, 39, 41. The historical record lends credence to Huntington’s commitment to black aspirations. He provided patronage to the Hampton Institute, where he was a member of the Board of Trustees, and to Booker T. Washington and George Washington Williams. Washington relays, “The first time I ever saw the late Collis P. Huntington, the great railroadman, he gave me two dollars for our school.” See Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography* (New York: Doubleday, 1901), 127. Moreover, after his death, Huntington’s wife donated $50,000 to Tuskegee Institute in 1899. See *The Booker T. Washington Papers, 1860-89*, vol. 2, ed. Louis P. Harlan (Urbana, Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 388, and John Hope Franklin, *George Washington Williams: A Bibliography* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), xvi, 185.

“A Wedding Journey,” Axtell, History of the Chesapeake and Ohio, Chapter VII, 12-17.

46 See “Colored Man Killed,” Huntington Advertiser, July 29, 1875, and “Death on the Rail,” Huntington Advertiser, August 26, 1875.


49 Ibid.

50 Ibid. See also Eller, “Mountain Road,” 48.

51 Eller, “Mountain Road,” 47.

52 Ibid.


54 “Railroad News,” The Cabell County Press (Guyandotte), April 18, 1870.

55 Eller, 43.


57 Ibid. Quote from The Cincinnati Enquirer, May 4, 1872.


59 Nelson, Steel Drivin’ Man, 26.

60 Tabscott, “John Henry,” 14. Also see Guy Johnson, John Henry: Tracking Down a Negro Legend (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1929). Evidence of this contention can be found in the 1877 Great Railroad Strike in Martinsburg, West Virginia by the workers (including significant numbers of black laborers) of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The strike crippled the nation, helped to convey a newfound sense of power to labor, foreshadowing the violent conflicts in the southern West Virginia coalfields of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century.


65 Ibid., 213.

66 Delineating the potential benefits of the extraction of mineral wealth-- iron ore, carboniferous limestone, and coal--from the New River Valley, the banking firm of Fisk & Hatch noted in 1873, “Having heretofore investigated and reported upon various furnaces and having in view the cheapness of coal and charcoal, fuel, labor in Virginia (colored), and the resources of water power, I am satisfied that pig iron can be made at numerous points along the road at from $18 to $20 per ton.” The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad: Its Advantages as a Through Passenger and Freight between the Seaboard and the West, 54.


68 The Ironton Weekly Journal (Ohio), February 28, 1873.

69 Eller, “Mountain Road,” 59.


73 Eller, “Mountain Road,” 54.

74 Ibid., 56.
77 Ibid., 165.
78 *The Democratic Banner* (Milton, WV), May 7, 1874.
79 One source notes, “Of the country’s 364 railroads, 89 went bankrupt, over 18,000 businesses failed between 1873 and 1875, unemployment reached 14 percent, while workers who kept their jobs were employed for a mere six months out of the year and suffered a 45% cut in wages, or approximately one dollar per day.” See “Economic Conditions of the 1870s,” n.p. [data online], accessed January 10, 2007, available from http://www.socialistappeal.org/uslaborhistory/great_railroad_strike_of_1877_.htm.

80 Conley, *West Virginia: A Brief History of the Mountain State*, 95. One source notes, “The effects of the downturn reached the U.S. on September 18th with the failure of the banking firm Jay Cooke and Company. As Cooke was the country’s top investment, the principal backer of the Northern Pacific Railroad, (as well as prime investor in other railroads), and handled most of the government’s wartime loans, its failure was catastrophic. In response the US economy sputtered and then collapsed. Shortly after Cooke’s demise, the New York Stock Exchange closed for 10 days, credit dried up, foreclosures and factory closings became common and other banks failed.” See “Economic Conditions of the 1870s,” n.p. [data online], accessed January 10, 2007, available from http://www.socialistappeal.org/uslaborhistory/great_railroad_strike_of_1877_.htm.
91 Nelson L. Barnett, Jr., interview by author, Columbus, OH, May 17, 2002, transcript in possession of author. The historical record lends credence to the possibility of such a relationship provided patronage to the Hampton Institute, where he was a member of the Board of Trustee’s,
and to Booker T. Washington and historian George Washington Williams. Moreover, after his
death, Huntington’s wife donated $50,000 to Tuskegee Institute in 1899. See *The Booker T.
Washington Papers, 1860-89*, vol. 2, ed. Louis P. Harlan (University of Illinois Press: Urbana,

92 *See The Douglass High School Reunion 1973 Souvenir Program* (Huntington, W. Va.: Franklin
Boggs (n.p., 1990), Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University,
Huntington, WV, 3; and Joe W. Trotter Jr., “Black Migration to Southern West Virginia,” *The
Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions in Race, Class, and Gender*, ed. Joe

93 *Slave narratives [database online].* A variety of reasons compelled African American migration
into the southern West Virginia coal fields. To work in Pennsylvania’s older, anthracite fields,
perspective black miners had to navigate a system of long established apprenticeships, which
effectively locked them out of mining jobs. Kenneth Bailey cites other push and pull factors
including higher wages, less discrimination, and better education systems for their children. Push
factors included droughts and bad harvests, brushes with the law, death of family members
(especially spouses), and desires for travel and new experiences. See Kenneth R. Bailey, “A
Judicious Mixture: Negroses and Immigrants in the West Virginia Mines, 1880-1917,” *Blacks in
Appalachia*, eds. William H. Turner and Edward J. Cabbell (Lexington: The University Press of
Kentucky, 1985), 127. Charles S. Johnson argues for the primacy of economic opportunity as
opposed to reaction to persecution for compelling black migration. See Charles S. Johnson, “How
Much is the Migration a Flight from Persecution,” *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*, Vol. 1,
No. 9 (September 1923).


95 Joe W. Totter, Jr., “The Formation of Black Community in Southern West Virginia Coalfields,”
*Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation*, ed. John C. Inscoe

96 Eller, “Mountain Road,” 60.

97 Conceptualized in response to the ghetto-synthesis model, which analyzed the racial, spatial,
and ecological aspects of ghetto formation the proletarian model shifted away from the negative or
pathological aspects associated with the former. W. E. B. Du Bois established a proletarian
framework in his influential *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860 to 1880: An Essay of the Part
Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America* (1935; repr., New
York: Meridian, 1964). See also Lewis, “From Peasant to Proletarian,” Joe W. Trotter, Jr., Black
Urbana, 1985), *Coal, Class and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915-1932* (University
of Illinois Press: Urbana, 1990), and “The Formation of Black Community in Southern West
Virginia Coalfields,” *Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation*,
Great Migration in Comparative Perspective: Interpreting the Urban Origins of Southern Black
Migrants to Depression-Era Pittsburgh,” *Social Science History* 22, no.3 (fall 1998): 349-376.

98 Scholars have challenged this interpretation and its elevation of class over race as the primary
determinant of black migrant solidarity and assimilation. See both Eric Foner, *Reconstruction:
America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row: New York, 1988), and
Clarence Walker, *Deromanticizing Black History* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press,


100 Edward Albert Cubby, “The Transformation of the Tug and Guyandot Valleys: Economic
Development and Social Change in West Virginia, 1888-1921,” (PhD diss., Syracuse University,
1962), John Deaver Drinko Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 165.

101 John Barnett, interviewed by John Morgan, Oral History of Appalachia Project and Drinko
Foundation, Special Collections, Marshall University, September 14, 1978, 7-8.


103 Ambler, *West Virginia: Stories and Biographies*, 357. Ambler reports that “in 1888 it [Bluefield] was only a flag station... By 1900 it had a population of five thousand, and the 1930 census credited it with more than twenty thousand.” For a history of Bluefield, see C. Stuart McGehee, *Bluefield, West Virginia, 1889-1989: A Centennial History* (Jostens, 1990), Bluefield State College, Bluefield, WV.

104 Nancy Whear, “Carter G. Woodson: An Annotated Chronology of His Life,” (n.p.: n.d.), Special Collections, Cabell County Public Library, Huntington, WV.


106 Charles P. Anson relays, that “of the 115, 229 gainfully employed over ten years of age in 1870, only 8,153 or 7% were women. West Virginia’s 7% women workers was less than half the percentage of wage earners in the nation at large in that year.” See Charles Phillips Anson, “The History of the Labor Movement in West Virginia,” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 1940), 60.

107 Figures cited in paragraph are revisions of those previously cited by author in “The Forging of a Black Community, 1870-1900” (master’s thesis, The Ohio State University, 2003), 77.


109 Ibid.


113 Chas. R. Wilson, “An Early Settler Looking Backward,” (n.p., 1925), Special Collections, Cabell County Library, Huntington, WV.

114 *The Huntington Advertiser*, March 18, 1875 and March 25, 1875.

115 *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880. In 1880, Black resides with wife, housekeeper Ann M. and two step children, Elizabeth and Edmonia Jones, aged 14 and 12, respectively. County-level black population totaled 890, 7% of the total county population. For county level population see 1880 Census of West Virginia, Volume II, Cabell, Wayne, Lincoln, Logan (Mingo), compiled by William Marsh (Gateway Press, Inc.: Baltimore, MD, 1990). Florette Henri, quoting economist Abram L. Harris, states, “That all the movements away from the rural South, from the Civil War on, were ‘fundamentally the result of the growth of machine industry, and of the lack of economic freedom and non-assurance of a margin of subsistence under the one crop share system of the agricultural South.” See Florette Henri, *Black Migration: Movement North, 1900-1920* (Anchor Press/Doubleday: Garden City, NY, 1975).


117 In 1880 Wayne County total population was 14,728. See Jack L. Dickinson, *Wayne County, West Virginia in the Civil War* (n.p., 2003), 129.


120 Black laborers had to navigate a system of long established apprenticeships to work in Pennsylvania’s older, anthracite fields, which effectively locked them out of mining jobs. See Ronald L. Lewis, *Black Coal Miners in America: Race, Class, and Community Conflict, 1780-1980* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 122.


*Huntington Cabell County, West Virginia*, Sanborn-Perris Map Co., March 1893, 1.


*Huntington Advertiser*, June 19, 1886, Special Collections, Archives and History Library, Charleston, WV.

*The Cabell Record* (Milton, WV), February 24, 1898.


Ibid., 69.

Ibid., 53.

Ibid., 97.


Peter J. Rachleff, *Black Labor in the South: Richmond, Virginia, 1865-1890* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, 1984). Rachleff chronicles Richmond membership in the Knights of Labor growing from 1,500 in 1885 to more than 10,000 before the Haymarket Square bombing and a counter-offensive by Richmond firms reduced the number to less than 1,400 workers by 1888. The Knights of Labor held some sway in the rural-industrial coal mines of nineteenth-century Hocking, Athens, and Perry counties. Rachleff comments on the historic significance of the Knights: They “were the last and most complete embodiment of labor’s struggle against emergence of a new social order, based on deskilled labor, strict hierarchy at the workplace, rigid industrial and social discipline, corporate power in politics, the separation of ‘life’ and ‘work’ between home and workplace, and the development of everyday culture as a collection of purchasable commodities rather than the creation of families, workmates, and neighbors.” See p. 192. See Herbert G. Gutman, “The Negro and the United Mine Workers of America: The Career and Letters of Richard L. Davis and Something of their Meaning, 1890-1900,” *The Negro and the American Labor Movement*, ed. Julius Jacobson (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1968), 49-127.

Prof. J.W. Scott, “Progress of the Huntington Negro,” (n.p., 1911), 2


Gutman, 117.
140 Wallace, Huntington Through Seventy-five Years, 71.
141 Portsmouth City Directory, 1881-2 (Cincinnati, OH: Spencer & Craig Printing Works, c.1882), 31, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH.
142 “Chronicles,” The Chronicle (Cincinnati), January 14, 1898, 2.
143 Report on Transportation Business in the United States, Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1895), 134. In contrast, the eastern division, based in Staunton, VA, comprised more than 5,000 employees. See p. 133. Charles Bias relays, “When contractors completed the road to Huntington, C&O officials divided it into two division[s]. E.T. Smith supervised the Eastern Division with offices in Staunton. Superintendent Joseph Mallory was in charge of the Western Division with offices in Huntington.” See Charles Bias, A History of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company and its Predecessors, 1787-1977 (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1979), 115, Transportation Library, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.
144 Engineers and Fireman’s Age Roster, Huntington Division, 1927, Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, Personnel Records, Seniority Rosters, Huntington Division, 1, Chesapeake and Ohio Historical Society, Clifton Forge, VA.
145 Conductors and Brakemen, Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, Personnel Records, Seniority Rosters, Huntington Division, Folder I, 81-54, Chesapeake and Ohio Historical Society, Clifton, VA.
149 Gutman, 60-70. Although the United Mine Workers, with its 20,000 members comprised the largest African American membership of any union in the nation in 1900, it is important to note that from 1900 to 1920, no union affiliated with the railroads, manufacturing, or teachers contained African Americans. In 1890, out of 81 organizations nationwide, only six contained blacks. In 1900, only eleven contained African Americans. In 1910, nineteen contained black members. See Negro Membership In American Labor Unions by the Department of Research and Investigations of the National Urban League (New York: The Alexander Press, 1930), 101-103, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH.
150 Anson relays that there is a lack of extant records detailing the early years of the labor movement within the state. “No complete record of the early labor movement in West Virginia—or in any other state for that matter—is obtainable. An early local, and even national, organizations came into existence in this country they usually kept poor records. The, as these groups passed off the scene or evolved into new groups, their meagre [sic] histories were lost. As a consequence, much of the early story in West Virginia comes from isolated incidents, some trivial and others significant, incomplete union and government reports, and news items of varying importance.” See Anson, 73.
151 Evelyn L. K. Harris and Frank J. Krebs, “One Hundred Years with West Virginia Labor,” (West Virginia Centennial Commission, 1963), West Virginia Historical Archives & Manuscripts Collections, West Virginia & Regional History Collection, Charles C. Wise, Jr., Library, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV, 4.
152 Javersak, 8-10, 37.


“News of the C. & O. Shops,” The Huntington Advertiser, March 14, 1900. The “Yard” or railroad yard refers to an area housing a complex series of railroad tracks for storing, sorting, or loading/unloading, railroad cars and/or locomotives by manual means.


Reverend Albert D. Lewis, “Before the Founding of Our Church,” Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and Community Center (n.p., 1930), James E. Morrow Library, Special Collections, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 8.


Huntington (West Virginia) City Directory, 1891-2 (Hamilton, Ohio: Hamilton Printing Company), and Duckworth, A Black History of Huntington, 4. Support of this contention is provided in the 1895/96 city directory, which also lacks reference to farming or river-based jobs for blacks. See Huntington, West Virginia Directory, 1895-6 (Huntington, W. Va.: W.H. Armitage, Publisher).


Huntington Advertiser, September 8, 1896.

Duckworth, A Black History of Huntington, 7.

Mrs. Shelby was born December 25, 1881 in Smith County, Mississippi. “Obituary,” Mrs. Almedia Duckworth Shelby, Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Covington, Kentucky, Edna Duckworth Collection, program in possession of author.

Ibid.
Ancella Bickley notes the brief publication of *The Industrial Messenger*, ca. 1911. She relays no other details about the paper. See Bickley, “Black People and the Huntington Experience,” 146. Then Farimont (West Virginia) State College professor Betty Hart makes no mention of the paper in her study. See Betty L. Powell Hart, “A Brief History of the Black Press in West Virginia,” (n.p.: n.d), West Virginia Archives and History Library, Charleston, WV.
Chapter 4: Black Migrant Influx in Huntington’s Formative Years, 1871-1900.
Had persecution been the dominant and original stimulus, the direction of Negroes during the sixty years following emancipation would have been north instead of further south.¹

Dan was very independent and a man of [sic] whom the colored race respected for his intellect. Dan came to Huntington before we had telephone[s] and when we wanted to talk with our neighbors, we had to go to their home.²

This chapter initiates discussion on the post-bellum transformation of black Huntington. This examination is largely framed by twin developments: Huntington’s nascent industrial expansion and attendant black migrant influx, synchronous and symbiotic developments tied to the city’s designation as the western transshipment station of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway. To better contextualize this metamorphosis and to illustrate the historical continuity linking the county’s ante-bellum and post-bellum residential black populations, the chapter also reiterates the purposeful nature of the migrant experience: first, by affirming the fundamental importance of social and kinship networks in the migratory process; and second, by illuminating the historical continuity linking ante-bellum and post-bellum black migration into the region. Lastly, the chapter situates the first generation of black migration into the city (and region) within the broader regional developments and dynamics of the era, illustrating the primacy of economic opportunity to the migratory process.
Map 4.1 Historical rendering of Black Huntington, circa 1872-1895. Source: Map of Huntington, West Virginia, Cabell County, 1871, Cabell County Department of Records, (Huntington, WV: Cabell County Court House).
When construction on the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad got underway, Huntington began to take on definitive shape, and businesses and industries settled in. During 1870-71, while Huntington finalized his plans, Rufus Cook, a renowned engineer from Boston, designed a city of wide streets, large blocks dissected by convenient alleys, and with large lots for dwellings and business houses of all kinds. On the eastern edge of the town, fronting Eighth Avenue on Twenty-eighth street, Huntington’s Central Land Company built two rows of houses, one of frame, one of brick, for the use of employees during the construction of the railroad and the C & O buildings and repair shops. Ensconced within the city limits, Huntington figured that an instant population was assured for this development. Later, these houses were rented to railroad employees.³

In his design, Cook envisioned the town’s commercial and industrial core stretching along the southern shore of the Ohio River. Its industrial core would extend south from the docks of Holderby’s Landing, adjacent to the river, stretching some three blocks, from Second to Fourth Avenue, and sixteen blocks west to east from First to Sixteenth Street (see map 5). Broad streets, eighty feet wide, included space for sidewalks. Third and Fifth avenues were designed to be the main arteries through the city and were 100 feet wide. Two wide streets, at Eighth and Twelfth streets, provided north-south routes into the center of the business district. The city’s solitary long thoroughfare proceeded northward from the C & O station on Ninth Street to a small settlement on the riverbank. Three subdivisions formed the
residential core. The largest, contiguous to the industrial section, followed the same east-west pattern as the industrial section until Eighth Avenue. Third Avenue became the primary residential section in town, and beyond it was mostly farmland. Between Seventh and Eighth Avenues the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway line passed east to west. East of this district was a second, smaller residential pocket. Stretching north to south from First to Twelfth Avenue and west to east from Twentieth to Twenty-fourth Street, this area, in contrast to the first, enlarged at Eighth Avenue, extending two blocks west to Eighteenth Street. A third subdivision, undeveloped but demarcated, adjoined the second but covered only five blocks from First to Fifth Avenue. Extending from Twenty-fourth to Thirtieth Street, its residential contours indicated that Huntington’s future population growth, at least in its early years, would follow a west to east direction along the banks of the Ohio River. Lots on Second Avenue between Ninth and Tenth streets sold rapidly.\(^4\)

As construction commenced, Huntington was more farmland than city, with extensive acreage of the rich river bottom flatland stretching along the Ohio owned by long-time white residents or C. P. Huntington’s Land Improvement Corporation. Thus, early black migrants arrived into a makeshift village. At the turn of the twentieth century the Huntington Chamber of Commerce reflected on the city’s crude beginnings, “In 1871, …and for twelve years, large ponds infested with mosquitoes covered much of the city’s territory, making it look like a section of the Florida
Everglades…5 Unsanitary conditions contributed to a smallpox outbreak in 1872, followed a year later by a more serious outbreak in Guyandotte in which 66 people died.6 Black migrant Reverend A. D. Lewis, from Louisa County, Virginia, and the future pastor of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church observed, “There were no waterworks. The water for washing purposes was gotten from a pond at Ninth Street and Sixth Avenue. The city was lighted by kerosene lamps on wooden posts. Of course there were no modern conveniences at all here.”7 The white president of the organization of Early Settlers, provides perspective on both early black settler Dan Hill, who began his career as a railroad porter for the C & O, and early 1870s Huntington.

Dan was very independent and a man of [sic] whom the colored race respected for his intellect. Dan came to Huntington before we had telephone[s] and when we wanted to talk with our neighbors, we had to go to their home. Dan came before we had electric street cars, electric lights, and gas. He came to Huntington before the big coal fields were opened up and the big gas and oil wells were discovered near Huntington. He came when Huntington knew no paving but only board walks and stepping stones across the street. No locks or dams in our Ohio River. He came here when all fire engines were drawn by horses or man-power, and when automobiles were not known…The Hearses (sic) were drawn through dust and mud streets by horses, as there were no motor drawn vehicles in that day.8

Black migrant influx during the 1870s and 1880s coincided with the development of Huntington’s infrastructure, with many settling in the
embryonic commercial district, close to the water wells kept by the city (water works were not installed by the water company until 1887). Cabell County’s population more than doubled from 6,429 residents in 1870 to 13,744 in 1880. Within the city, 3,174 individuals lived with 487 black residents (a three-fold increase from 1870), including ninety-seven mulattoes, comprising slightly more than half (54%) of the county’s 902 total. By 1880 Huntington possessed more black residents than Wayne, Lincoln, and Logan (Mingo) counties combined. In many respects, Huntington’s black population resembled that of Ironton and Portsmouth, Ohio, or Ashland, Kentucky, where historical and cultural commonalities linked black residents with those of other towns throughout the Ohio Valley. For instance, in 1880 forty-one percent of Lawrence County’s 1,746 black residents (located across from Cabell County) cited West Virginia as their birthplace.

Following shortly after the Barnett group migrated to Huntington, were Lewis Foes, Henry Hunt, Caroline King, and Mary Carter, and other black migrants, drawn by the prospect of gainful employment tied to the rise of the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad arrived into the town throughout the 1870s and the latter part of the nineteenth century: in the process, they reversed a trend that had existed from 1860 to 1870, when the county’s African American residents left the county in droves, including a number of the county’s freepersons. Although it is not possible to know their exact circumstance upon arrival, in 1880 both King and Carter were widows in
households of six, including immediate and extended family members.¹² Foes, twenty-nine in 1872, relocated from Virginia to Huntington sometime after 1870, and by 1880 was a newly married laborer. That year, his household consisted of his wife, Ann, a West Virginia native, their teenage son Arthur, and their adopted daughter Laura Davis, five. Fellow Virginian Hunt, twenty-seven in 1872, also relocated to Huntington sometime after 1870. In 1880, his household included his twenty-one-year-old New York born wife Carrie, and their one-year-old daughter, Isabella.¹³ In 1880, Huntington’s 487 black residents comprised 6.5 percent of the general population. In 1870, only 123 blacks, representing 1.9 percent, resided in the whole county.

Throughout the late-nineteenth century, Huntington’s growth as a key industrial and commercial center contributed to increasing black migrant influx throughout the region. For example, the growth in black migrant influx into Huntington coincided with increases in the black populations of both Lawrence and Gallia counties. Linked to its location on the north shore of the Ohio River, across from Huntington and Cabell County, Lawrence County’s black population nearly doubled between 1860 and 1870, increasing from 685 to 1,241. By 1880, it had blossomed to 1,746 individuals, a mere twelve short of its 1890 total, the highest of the nineteenth century. Likewise, from 1860 to 1870, the black population in Gallia increased from 1,590 to 2,802, and then again during the next decade, to reach 2,945 individuals, its highest total of the century.¹⁴
Black migrants arriving into the town faced challenges in their quest for citizenship. As one authority relays, “From 1872 to 1882, the state’s Blacks were politically unorganized. Yet, they held a certain balance of power because they were committed to neither the Democratic nor the Republican party.” On the heels of the 1870 Flick Amendment (which granted suffrage to adult males), white voters demanded a state Constitutional Convention. In 1872, the Convention met, inflaming African American passions across the state because the state legislature, which had no black members, attempted to disenfranchise them. So strong was lingering Confederate sentiment among some legislators that delegate John J. Thompson of Putnam County declared that West Virginia “Negroes were less capable of self-government than the buffalo on the plains.”

Addressing the fear of black social and political equality, historian John R. Sheller writes of the Convention,

Proposals were made to change the name of Grant and Lincoln counties to Davis and Lee. Legislators feel that if Negroes were to vote it would be social equality, they would soon enter the schools, enter the legislative halls and that Negroes would come into the state and gain their jobs in industry and public work. Probably the last mentioned was the root of most of the fears.

Encapsulating a long and contentious political battle that began with the inception of the state, the Convention eventually settled, once and for all, the question of black enfranchisement. By six votes, the right of voting and
the privilege of office holding was permanently granted to the state’s black population.18

In January 1873, the Chesapeake and Ohio inaugurated passenger service between Richmond and Huntington with pullman cars which had no diners. From west to east, trains stopped for meals at Lexington, Kentucky, the four stations in West Virginia, Huntington, Kanawha Falls, Hinton, and Alderson, and those in Virginia, Clifton Forge, and V. M. Junction (see Map 3). Availing themselves of employment opportunities as their brethren in Huntington, black migrants transformed a number of these previously nondescript stations into black enclaves throughout the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century. As a teenager in the mid-1880s, former journalist George C. McIntosh remembered traveling with his father on “his railroad run” between Huntington and Clifton Forge. He observed that “the negro miners of the New and Kanawha valleys filled the train coaches every day, and were liberal purchasers of cigars, candy and fruits.”19 Many migrants also traveled back and forth on the rail line, with many stopping at a particular location to inquire about employment opportunities, to start anew, to renew acquaintances, friendships, or romances, or just to shop or sightsee. Thus, these stations also served as hubs on the collective black migrant network. For example, Virginia migrants and eventual Huntington residents Reverends R. J. Perkins and A. D. Lewis first served as pastors of Hinton’s Second Baptist Church, before becoming pastors of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Huntington. Their respective years of residency in Hinton,
and their respective arrivals into Huntington in the mid-1890s, as well as their eventual tenures at Sixteenth Street Baptist, suggests the potential of an ongoing personal and professional relationship tied to their histories as migrants.  

Andrew M. Baker migrated to Huntington from Louisa Court House, Virginia (located in Louisa County, just north of the James River and Kanawha Turnpike), around 1885. He acquired work on the railroad at the age of 12 and eventually became the Grand Master of the Masons of the State. Prior to migrating, Baker’s friendships in the black enclaves along the railroad lines contributed to his social and intellectual life in unique ways. During an extended stint in Clifton Forge, Baker maintained correspondence with a lady “but was at the disadvantage of having his letters to her written by another, and her letters to him read by another.” Using native intelligence and the assistance of others, Baker eventually learned how to write letters of his own to his romantic interest. By the time he arrived into Huntington sometime around 1885, Baker was literate, embodying the very essence of a “self-made man.”

Like Nelson Barnett’s, and A. D. Lewis’, Baker’s life was emblematic of the thousands of black migrants whose exploits and enterprises were purposeful and grounded in the twin pillars of church and community. In the quest for self-actualization, many black migrants relied upon and manifested both callings, sometimes traveling far and wide. Along the way, many acquired knowledge, skills, and alliances that would benefit
their lives, their community, and their race for many years afterwards.

The black experience in Huntington during this era is very much related to the intra-regional movement of tens of thousands of blacks into central Appalachia and the southern West Virginia coalfields during the late-nineteenth century. Compelled by a variety of overlapping reasons including economic opportunity, resurgent southern white racism, political enfranchisement, and the quest for “community,” this transplantation of black southerners transformed the economic, political, social and cultural dynamics of the region.

John Lewis Griffith’s life provides an opportunity for a more thorough examination of the mechanics of post-bellum migration and the links that facilitated and followed black migrant influx. Born a slave in Flemingburg, Kentucky, on January 25, 1849, Griffith was raised on a farm and after emancipation learned carpentry. Sometime during the close of the Civil War, at the age of sixteen, he converted and became a member of the African Methodist Episcopal denomination. After emancipation, he migrated to Portsmouth, Ohio, attended school and took a correspondence course in theology. Speaking of his residency there, Griffith relays, “I worked in the brick yard in the summer, and worked for my board and clothes in the winter so I could get some learning.”

In 1880, he was called to preach, and after attending “the Conference” in Lexington, began his first pastorate in Old Town, Ohio, for one year. From there, he served pastorates in Kentucky, including one year in
Greenup, two years in Louisa, where he erected a new church, and two years in Belfre, where he combined teaching and preaching. In the latter endeavor, he was assisted by his new wife, the former Virginia (Jennie) Moore, whom he had wed in May 1884. After a one year pastorate at Wayne Court House, West Virginia, he, Jennie and their new son arrived in Huntington. The family resided in the city throughout the decade, where he and Jennie worked respectively as a driver and domestic, and he assisted the presiding elder at Ebenezer United Methodist Church. In 1891, he was named a church trustee along with Robert Davis, Lewis Foes, John Shafer, John L. Griffith, and Robert Humphrey. Shortly after 1895, the family relocated to Elkins, West Virginia, the first of several moves throughout West Virginia before eventual settlement in Williamson, West Virginia. Elsa Mae Davis, recalling her father’s migration, relays that in 1891, “Lincoln McPherson Davis walked to Charleston from Roane County, [West Virginia,] to seek work to help care for his grandmother and brother. Dad walked back to Left Hand and brought his grandmother and brother to Charleston. The[y] settled on the back of the mountain now called Edgewood-Magazine Mountain.” The influx of black laborers into southern West Virginia coincided with the movement of tens of thousands of black migrants north and west and must be viewed against the other to understand fully the historical reality and motivations behind the mass black migration into the region.
The first generation of migrants entering the town after its incorporation arrived at a propitious time. In 1870, Huntington possessed no black churches or schools, no black stores or restaurants, and no black elected officials in the town or county. But their foresight, initiative, perseverance and good fortune positioned them to benefit from four important, interrelated, and overlapping historical forces. First, while a part of the great drama of a larger intra-regional movement initiated with the emancipation of millions of slaves, the initial wave of migrants into the town preceded the tens of thousands of blacks, Anglos, and European immigrants arriving into Central Appalachia and the southern West Virginia coalfields during the latter part of the nineteenth and first part of the twentieth century. As Jacqueline Jones states, “The history of the South’s extractive economy between 1875 and 1930 is the history of successive displacements of rural folk, beginning with fathers squeezed by tenancy, men who began working for modest wages part of the year, and culminating in families pushed off the farm together and trapped in company towns and work camps.” By foregoing the rural South and rural-industrial southern

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Total Population</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>Percentage/Af-Am Population</th>
<th>Percentage increase by decade</th>
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<td>442,014</td>
<td>17,980</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1870 to 1880—44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>618,457</td>
<td>25,896</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1880 to 1890—22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>762,794</td>
<td>32,690</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1890 to 1900—33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>958,800</td>
<td>43,499</td>
<td>4.6</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
West Virginia, Huntington’s black migrants embarked on a social and cultural trajectory distinct from the masses who settled farther south.

In essence, the many black migrants arriving into the region during the late-nineteenth century comprised a fairly homogeneous group, one in which cultural, economic, native, social and family foundations predominately derived from antebellum and post-bellum central Virginia and the Border States. In 1870, while small numbers of black residents from North and South Carolina, Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee resided within the county, adult residents overwhelmingly cited either West Virginia (36 percent) or Virginia (30 percent) as their birthplace. In 1880, the percentage of Virginian-born migrants into Huntington (29 percent) was largely consistent with that into the county the previous decade. Marriage records help to reveal the integral role played by the railroad in facilitating western migration from Virginia. From 1877-1880, the Cabell County Marriage Register lists a total of forty-six ‘colored’ marriages (twenty-six conducted by Nelson Barnett), of which forty-two (91 percent) contained at least one individual born in a Virginia county to which or through which the C & O Railroad lines ran. Assessing black influx into the state James T. Laing notes that 92.6% of the Virginia natives came into West Virginia directly from Virginia. These circumstances surely assisted the acculturation of thousands into their new social milieu.

Second, the migrants arrived during the initial stages of the industrial revolution of the Central Appalachia plateau, a transformation led by the
spread of railroad. Thus, black migrants entered the region at the very time their labor was needed. In truth, the necessity of black labor to the economic growth of the state and region during the late-nineteenth century is incalculable. Black labor felled timber, mined coal, and built the railroad. In 1871, the Chesapeake and Ohio employed some 5,000 black laborers. In fact, one scholar stated, “one could say with a great deal of accuracy that this important road was largely built by Negro laborers.” The C & O was merely one of many railroads to crisscross the region, assisting in the extraction of salt, timber, and especially coal. Thirteen separate railroads were incorporated in Huntington between 1873 and 1887. Although most remained stillborn or mere spurs or branches to be acquired by the Chesapeake and Ohio, both the C & O and the Norfolk & Western Railroad (formed in 1889) survived to remake southern West Virginia and Central Appalachia. In the process, they brought thousands of laborers, supplied hundreds of thousands of investment dollars, extracted millions of tons of coal, and produced tens of millions of dollars in profit. From 1870 to 1880 the state’s population increased forty percent and per capital wealth grew from $430 to $550. So impactful was Collis P. Huntington’s larger-than-life imprint upon the area’s black people that in 1880 Texas migrant and timber worker, Isaac Reynolds, and his West Virginia-born wife Mary Ann, named their son C. P. Huntington Reynolds.

Not all welcomed the railroad however, especially recalcitrant was the small farmer and the urban poor whose farms and homes were scheduled for
destruction in order to clear the way. As one historian notes, “Independent, self-sufficient, and slow to change, a few rugged individuals saw the encroachment of the road as an unwanted change and moved deeper into the mountains to avoid the iron rails.”

Another states, “The natives through whose settlements the Chesapeake and Ohio line was to pass tried to keep it from being built by refusing rights-of-way and destroying railroad property. They feared that their dogs, pigs, and chickens would be killed by ‘the cars.’”

Lacking sufficient economic and political clout, efforts by the poor and marginalized were largely ineffectual; however, it is noteworthy that certain populations within the area resisted the dictates of the power elite, and their industrial era mandates as best they could. Numerous property owners launched legal challenges against C & O aspirations to purchase their land at what were perceived to be low prices.

Third, Huntington’s burgeoning economy provided some peace of mind to many of the town’s first generation of ambitious black migrants via the promise of stable wages and the prospect of long-term financial stability. After only two years of working, James Woodson “had earned enough money to purchase twenty-one acres near his father’s farm in New Canton.”

Further, Huntington’s broadening economy afforded opportunities, albeit limited, for upward mobility and/or job change, a circumstance that enabled many of the first generation to avoid (or, perhaps delay) the pattern of step-migration (which involved continual migration) necessitated by job competition, economic downturns, or a non-diversified
As an anniversary program of the First Baptist Church summarized, “The railroad brought a diversity of industries, opportunities and people to the area. In the midst of this splendid growth and development the ‘colored population’ also prospered in laborer and support service jobs.”

Migration frequently provided opportunities for young men and women to take advantage of conditions not available in their previous community. Before arriving in Huntington in the mid-1890s where he garnered his high school education, formally initiating his singular academic and professional career, Carter G. Woodson, “The Father of Black History,” frequently credited his early backroom discussions and readings among black miners in southern West Virginia as the inspiration for his pioneering movement to recognize African American history. Certainly, a testament to the optimism felt by many recent arrivals in their new surroundings is the fact that many decided to marry and settle in the city. Yet, even for those migrants seeking a home, a sense of purpose, and, perhaps community, the quest to acquire them faced significant challenges.

Woodson referred to the quest as embodying “manhood.” He continued, “The indisposition to labor was overcome in a healthy nature by instinct and motives of superior forces, such as love of life, the desire to be clothed and fed, the sense of security derived from provision for the future, the feeling of self respect, the love of family and children and the convictions of duty.”

Nell Irvin Painter’s examination of the “Exodusters,”
the group of black migrants who fled the Mississippi Valley to Kansas after
Reconstruction is instructive, for, as she argues, they were members of a
black working class “whose immediate history as slaves” was “practically as
important as their race” in shaping the course of their lives. The first
generation of Afro-Huntingtonians was no different. They were linked
geographically as well as geo-culturally. While not dismissing the fractures
and fissures attendant to diversified black influx, or the individualism
inherent in human nature, a shared history and sense of duty guided the
efforts of many black migrants in their attempts to establish needed black
institutions.

Last, the importance of the absence of Jim Crow laws within the state
and the retention of the franchise for black residents, “factors that facilitated
school and social welfare desegregation, a greater measure of justice before
the law, and the political power to preserve these institutions,” cannot be
overstated. As has been illuminated, while the “Negro question” produced
protracted, contentious, and sectionalist debate within the legislature during
the State’s formative political process, recognition of black political rights
ultimately prevailed. Thus, even at its harshest, black migrants experienced
a markedly tempered strain of racial discrimination within West Virginia
compared to other Central Appalachia states, a circumstance T. Edward Hill,
the first Director of West Virginia’s Bureau of Negro Welfare and Statistics,
with some truth, attributed to “the character of slavery in areas such as West
Virginia, with small slave holdings and direct contact between owner and slave…” 45

In part, Huntington’s early development (and to some extent its attraction to black migrants) can be traced to the presence of young, ambitious, and more liberal-minded white males, many who benefited undoubtedly from their status as members of prominent Cabell County families. After visiting the first court held in the county after West Virginia’s admission, one newspaperman opined, “The youthful appearance of the judge, the clerk, and the members of the bar is in remarkable contrast with the old officers and members of the bar constituting the Cabell circuit court of former times.” The men who had dominated Cabell law and politics “for more than thirty years” were dead, retired, or “somewhere in Dixie.” 46

The general lack of racial discord during the city’s remarkable growth is even noted by the city’s business leaders. Full of municipal pride over the promise of prosperity, and in an attempt to attract more to the city, the Huntington Chamber of Commerce heralded the city as a model of progress, industry, and openness at the turn of the twentieth century:

If any one element, outside natural advantages, has made Huntington a prosperous city, it has been its hospitable attitude toward strangers, and its welcome to newcomers. Rival cities, with much greater opportunities for speedy growth, have been deterred and hindered by reserved, if not repellant, attitude toward those who sought admittance. Social and commercial barriers, reared by self-appointed authorities, have retarded natural development. This city is an open field now. All have an equal chance. The best wins. 47
Certainly, progressive sentiment did not mitigate notions of racial superiority held by the region’s whites, nor did it translate to ideas of egalitarianism in early Huntington. In 1873, in Charleston, after the mayor and city council appointed Ernest Porterfield as police officer, possibly the first black policeman in the state, the rest of the force, including the chief, resigned within the hour. Virginia experienced an increasing number of lynchings during the latter part of the nineteenth century--three in 1888, seven in 1889, nine in 1892 and twelve in 1893. Although relatively few in number when compared to Virginia and the Deep South, ten lynchings occurred in West Virginia from 1890 to 1900. The only African American lynched in Huntington during its formative years, in 1876, Ed Williams was taken from his Barboursville jail cell and hung for murdering the husband of his white lover. Despite this incident, white Huntingtonians seemed to possess some open-mindedness towards black people. Speaking on his social experiences some years after his arrival, Reverend A. D. Lewis remarked, “I enjoyed the fellowship and favors of neighbors, especially the Harvey family, with whom the color of my skin made no difference.” Huntington’s growth (218.5 percent between 1880 and 1890), continuing migrant influx, and the presence of liberalism afforded opportunity for both black and white to interact in the spaces Jim Crow had yet to penetrate. Moreover, the first generation of black migrants arrived prior to the
hardening of race relations precipitated by the rise of Jim Crow throughout the South during the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In part, the establishment of a rigid racial code in Virginia was retarded by the fluid state of southern society from the end of the Civil War to the end of the century. Jack Temple Kirby notes inconsistency and unorthodoxy marked the era: as early as 1870, the Alexandria and Orange Railroad had a Jim Crow car, yet blacks rode the line throughout the 1880s without incidence. In fact, blacks frequently rode in first class everywhere in the state throughout the late-1800s. Kirby notes, “Only in 1900 did White Virginia legislators get around to codifying Jim Crow on the railways—thereby imposing through the majesty of law an orthodoxy that had not existed before.” This is not surprising given the recent *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896) Supreme Court decision upholding racial segregation, and the attendant objections by railroads to the legislation because of the additional cost of providing separate cars. Thus, many migrants in both Virginia and West Virginia were able to exploit the strains of liberalism and societal and legal flux within the region.

By 1890, Huntington’s general population had reached 10,108. The city’s black population had increased nearly three-fold to 1,231. By now, Huntington’s transition from a mere township to an urban-industrial enclave was well underway. 82 percent of the county’s 1,493 black inhabitants resided within its city limits. Throughout the decade, regular and routine train travel to and from Richmond, and the construction of new rail lines
serving southwestern West Virginia increased the flow of rural blacks to the city who arrived to shop, fellowship, sightsee, and recreate. Recalling his trip to the city in the latter part of the century, Carl Barnett, the son of Carter Barnett and the grandson of Reverend Barnett, recalls, “My earliest memories are of the train ride from Romney to Huntington. I can still remember how everything would get black when we’d pass through those tunnels.”56 Surely, he was just one of many who maintained fond memories of their first trip to the “big city.”

In summation, after the Civil War, thousands, followed by tens of thousands left homelands and homesteads. Relying upon ingenuity, fortitude, family, and faith in themselves, bound by their cultural and historical commonalities, and using the well-worn paths of their ancestors, scores traveled across the Appalachia Mountains to find gainful employment and a home. Many settled into nascent rural-industrial coal towns located along the lines of the embryonic Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, but some choose to relocate to the emergent urban-industrial town of Huntington. Here, they began to build their lives. Early black migrant influx into Huntington reveals that it is impossible to separate the greater historical forces of the era—racism, migration, capitalism, and industrialization—from the basic human desire for freedom, citizenship, autonomy, and self-determination. Like thousands of other black southerners, black migrants endured hardship and deprivation to start either life anew in similar residential circumstances or to migrate across hundreds of miles to a place
that they believed offered better opportunity. In this respect, they were pioneers and trailblazers. In the process of their rebirth, they helped initiate the socio-cultural transformation of black southern West Virginia, a topic discussed in the next chapter.
4 James E. Casto, Huntington: An Illustrated History (Northridge, California: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1985), 25. Providing evidence of the east-west residency patterns is the fact that city transportation was first available in 1888 with an electric streetcar which ran from the business district east to the Guyandotte Bridge. A second line was franchised in 1890 which ran east from the business district, eventually turning south on 16th Street and east on Eighth Avenue. See George Selden Wallace, Huntington Through Seventy-Five Years (Richmond, VA: Garrett & Massie Publishers, 1947).
6 Wallace, Huntington Through Seventy-Five Years, 25.
7 Reverend Albert D. Lewis, “Before the Founding of Our Church,” Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and Community Center (n.p., 1930), Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 3.
8 Wilson, “An Early Settler Looking Backward,” 127, and Rick Baumgartner, “First Families of Huntington.” Reprinted from The Huntington Advertiser (Huntington, WV: James E. Morrow Library, Special Collections, Marshall University) 18 part series, October 28, 1976-March 24, 1977, 27. No evidence could be found to determine the exact date of Hill’s arrival into the city. Census data failed to provide residential status for 1870 or 1880.
13 Ibid.
16 Engle, 153.
18 Ibid., 201.
19 George C. McIntosh Memoirs, (1869-1935), A&M No.: 2599, 10, West Virginia Historical Archives & Manuscripts Collections, West Virginia & Regional History Collection, Charles C. Wise, Jr., Library, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV.
20 The History of Summers County West Virginia (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Press, Inc., 1984), Special Collections, Summers County Public Library, Hinton, WV, 119.


Laing, “The Negro Miner,” 274. That most black migrants into Huntington arrived from nearby should not be surprising. Relevant scholarship on the mechanics and meanings of migration can be traced back to as far as the late-19th century. E.G. Ravenstein’s ambitious “Laws of Migration,” written in 1885, addressed migration in England through examination of 1871 and 1881 places of residence by place-of-birth tabulations from British census. One of his simple but influential conclusions was growing cities get most of their migrants from very nearby. Moreover, he refuted the widely held belief that migration to a large industrial city involved laborers torn from strange and distant locales. Instead, he argued, “under normal conditions the migratory movement will be a gradual one; it will proceed step by step, and will be transmitted from province to province.”30 Recently scholars have integrated into the step-migration concept Central Place theory. Rather than merely emphasizing the “spatial” aspects of direct rural-to-urban migration—the distance from place of origin, the critical factors in Central Place theory shift to city size and “function.”30 The proximity of black migrant origins and Huntington’s rise as a regional industrial, commercial, and cultural center, compel conceptualization embracing a hybrid process, a hypothesis Dennis Conway referred
to as “hierarchical-cum-spatial step-wise migration.”30 I contend proximity, centrality, and function encapsulated the reasons and rationale compelling black migrant influx into Huntington.

31 Ibid., 147

32 “Railroad Incorporation,” Deed Index R 18, No. 1 Grantor 1808-1922, 17. The railroads are as follows: 1873) Mud River Railroad Company, Guyandotte Railroad Company; 1875) West Virginia Railroad Company; 1878) Potomac and Ohio Railroad Company; 1879) Baltimore Cincinnati & Western Railway Company; 1881) West Virginia and Ohio, Guyan Valley; 1882) Guyan River and Logan County, Guyandotte and Great Southern Railroad; 1883) Chesapeake and Ohio; 1886) Chesapeake and Ohio; 1887) Virginia and Ohio, Ohio River.

33 Phil Conley reports that, due to the effects of the Depression of 1873, only two railroads were developed in the state between 1873 and 1881. See Phil Conley, West Virginia: A Brief History of the Mountain State (Charleston, W. Va.: West Virginia Publishing Co., 1940), 95.

34 Ibid.

35 Tenth Census of the United States, 1880. The Reynolds’ were residents of the county not Huntington. Isaac was the only black migrant listed from west of the Mississippi River.


40 “History of First Baptist Church,” 124th Church Anniversary (n.p., 1996), Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 1.


46 John Alexander Williams, West Virginia: A History (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2001), 84

47 Huntington Chamber of Commerce, Forward.

48 Sheeler, 202. Sheeler reports that rather than ask for Porterfield’s resignation, the mayor hired a new force.


Reverend Albert D. Lewis, “Before the Founding of Our Church,” *Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and Community Center* (n.p., 1930), Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 3.

Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900.


In an ironic twist, the C. & O. Shops were instructed “to furnish separate apartments [sic] for colored people on their trains.” See “News of the C. & O. Shops,” *The Huntington Advertiser*, 22 February 1900. It is almost a certainty that black laborers assisted in this effort and that they knew the purpose of the work on the cars. We can only speculate to the reaction of black workers in the plant to this development.

Chapter 5: Community, Race, and Class: Black Settlement Patterns, 1871-1900.

Even in its earliest years, there were African Americans living in various parts of Huntington. However, most black residents were segregated into positions
“horrendously unequal to the bulk of the white populace” in occupation, civil rights and social position.¹

What was the character of our first settlers? They came without money, without training, without skill, without leadership. They were mostly farm hands brought from the rural parts of Virginia by railroad contractors.²

There is no doubt that Reconstruction transformed the lives and aspirations of black southerners “in ways unmeasurable by statistics and in realms far beyond the reach of the law.”³ The transcendent nature of this transformation presented numerous and varied challenges for millions. Too many unanswered questions remained for black migrants to revel in their good fortune, to be completely oblivious to their circumstance. They, like tens of thousands of black migrants to other destinations used various strategies and tactics to overcome economic upheaval, persistent racism, and discrimination. Thus, the decision by Huntington’s black settlers to relocate to the town rested upon evaluating multiple criteria, and must have caused some uneasiness among many of them. Forging a new life in a new town required for most a tempered agenda and enlightened assessment, and was probably the black migrant’s most important exercise of free will.

Long before the city’s founding and African American settlement within it, slavery bound black people together from both sides of the Ohio River, ties that radiated up and down the Ohio Valley. Though not physically reconstructed after the Civil War, like so much of the South, the region underwent profound
economic, psychological, and social upheaval. After its incorporation in 1871, Huntington’s industrial economy served as the catalyst, linking it by river to Pittsburgh and Cincinnati, and by rail to the southern West Virginia coalfields and Richmond, Virginia. Within this larger context, Huntington’s African Americans lived their lives. Their historical metamorphosis coincided with the transformation of the nation, the region, and the town’s rise as an industrial, economic, social, and political hub. Like black people residing in cities throughout the nation, the city’s black residents surely differed on what constituted the distinguishing characteristics of community and to what extent they subscribed to it, yet as increasing numbers settled into the city, most operated within its tentative and fluid confines, bound by a sense of moral duty, social status, and shared history.

This chapter examines the metamorphosis of African American life in Cabell County and Huntington during the late-nineteenth century: first, by offering a theoretical definition of community to better situate the historical development and evolution of communal ties between and amongst Huntington’s emergent black population; second, by examining the nature of race relations in the town and the divergent responses of the first wave of Afro-Huntingtonians to the town’s racialized environment during its formative years and last, by illuminating the demographic and settlement patterns of black migrants during the town’s early physical metamorphosis.

Certainly, significant numbers of arriving black migrants embodied a commitment to the idea of community, even if they disagreed upon its nature, obligations, and responsibilities. Numerous historians and sociologists have
likewise encountered difficulty defining it. In the late-nineteenth century German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies theorized that the nature of community shifted as a society transitioned from pre-modern to industrial. Tönnies labeled the concept Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft to represent the shift. Gemeinschaft, or folk community, represents the time of the village or small town bound together by intimate, familiar, and traditional human associations embracing a sense of shared social consciousness. In Gesellschaft, or industrial society, people are bound together by relationships that lack emotional investment and that are causal, transitory and reflective of self-interest. The utilization of these base concepts to encapsulate the varying nature of community within the modern era has presented challenges to scholars as they attempt to address

the distinguishing characteristics and definition of community, the bases of communal experience and integration, the unique functions and tasks of community, the units of social structure within the community and the relationships and interactions between structural units, the economic and social bases of the community social structure, the relationship and distinction between internal community social structure and macrosocial structures external to the community, the relationship between individual experience and behavior and communal experience and behavior, the causes and processes of transformation from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft states of social existence, and processes of community persistence and adaptation in the face of social change.

In 1955 George Hillary analyzed ninety-four definitions of community advanced in sociological literature and discovered basic consensus on only three elements: social interaction between people, one or more shared ties, and an area
context. However, he noted that area context was the least significant of the three definitional elements. Others argue explicitly that community can be achieved independently of territorial context where social networks exist sufficiently to sustain a Gemeinschaft quality of interaction and association. In effect, they contend “territory is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition to define the existence of community.”

David Chavis and David McMillan posit that community exists where four elements co-exist: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connections. They argue that communities can be defined either in relational terms or territorial terms as long as these four elements are present together.

Out of necessity, a working definition must be offered as a way to describe and situate the historical development and evolution of communal ties between and amongst Huntington’s black population. The Social Science Encyclopedia offers one definition:

Community, in a sense of type of collectivity, usually refers to (1) a group sharing a defined physical space or geographical area such as a neighborhood, city, village or hamlet; (2) a group sharing common traits, a sense of belonging and/or maintaining social ties and interactions which shape it into a distinctive social entity, such as ethnic, religious, academic, or professional community.

In contrast, the Encyclopedia of Sociology concentrates on the “ethos” of community, removing geography as a component in its definition. Instead, community is defined “as a combination of two elements: a) A web of affect-
laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often
crisscross and reinforce one another (rather than merely one-on-one or chainlike
individual relationships) and b) A measure of commitment to a set of shared
values, norms, and meanings, and a shared history and identity to a particular
culture.”

Although spatial proximity does not necessarily denote commonality or
affect-laden linkages, it is impossible to separate black Huntington’s social
circumstance from the city’s physical geography and the social cohesion that
existed in the “sentimental boundaries”—the churches, bars, parks, barber shops,
and neighborhoods--black residents’ fellowshipped, recreated, and socialized.

In effect, within and around Huntington, radiating back and forth, there existed
communities within communities, linking, binding, enriching, and complicating
the collective aspirations of its black citizens.

The Barnett’s, Woodson’s, and thousands of other black migrants who
arrived into Huntington in its early years embodied a sense of community, even as
they arrived with few economic assets other than their labor. Noting that both
slavery’s legacy and the new wage-labor environment had proven corrosive to the
aspirations of the black migrant, Afro-Huntingtonian and future principal of
Douglass High School, professor J. W. Scott recalled:

They were housed in shanties, fed from commissaries, worked like horses all the week and
turned out to frolic on Sundays. They had less than nothing to build on for in addition to
being loaded down with all the wrongs of slavery, they were forced to accept conditions not
at all conducive to morals and home getting. A dollar was regarded simply as an equivalent for so much indulgence.¹¹

Scott’s long-term residency, professional status, and community ties provided him important insight (and biases) into the status of the city’s African American population, past and present. As a young man, Scott arrived into the city in the early-1890s from Henrico County, Virginia, and settled at 620 Eighth Avenue, where he was soon joined by his brakeman father, Isham.¹² In 1905, he utilized his education, knowledge and experiences to start the first black newspaper in the city, of which he was co-editor. Many of his observations of Huntington’s black migrants were undoubtedly true: significant numbers arrived into the town subject to the whims and dictates of influential men and powerful political, legal, and economic forces. From the city’s founding “Negro shanties” dotted the city, and black crime and vagrancy proved troublesome to city leaders.¹³ But equally undeniable is that few if any thought of themselves as impotent or pathological. When able, they celebrated. For example, as early as December 30, 1875, black migrants held a party, in which “the colored gentry of the city” gave a masked ball at Ingrams Hall, “which was very largely attended.”¹⁴ In fact, evidence indicates that the vast majority embodied the character, discipline, and will-power “conducive to morals and home getting.”¹⁵ In paying homage to the courage and struggles encapsulating the black migrant experience of Afro-Huntingtonians yet simultaneously elevating their shortcomings, Scott’s account is instructive.
In pointing out the failings of the early black migrant, Scott’s rhetoric positions him as critic and rescuer and speaks to a larger dichotomy extant within post-bellum black society, one that warrants deeper examination. First and foremost, like other marginalized and exploited groups throughout American history, black migrants navigated the capitalistic and white controlled urban industrial terrain as best they could. As an educated black professional, it is difficult to imagine Scott’s not being cognizant of and conversant in the philosophy of “uplift ideology” that middle-class black Americans embraced after the Civil War. Growing ever mindful of the inability of Victorian-era society to address black needs and aspirations during the transition from slave to free during Reconstruction, what George Washington Williams terms “the plastic period,” black intellectuals, black institutions, and the black middle class engaged in collective efforts to determine the destiny of the black community.¹⁶

The Reconstruction era provided an opportunity for blacks to construct a position in society. Uplift ideology envisioned and promulgated social programs and political mobility as ways to combat the derogatory treatment of the masses. Historian Kevin Gaines described uplift as, “a group struggle for freedom and social advancement, uplift also suggests that African Americans have… regarded education as the key to liberation. This sense of uplift as a liberation ideology flourished after emancipation and during reforms of Reconstruction…uplift also represented the struggle for a positive black identity in a deeply racist society.”¹⁷ The collective ideal behind uplift remained the same—blacks helping each other to fight their common status as second-class citizens. As a people, they were
dependent on each other and the greater community. Yet in the city, as across
America, African American economic and political progress during the late-
nineteenth and early-twentieth century resulted in racial advancement and social
stratification, confounding and complicating the quest to forge community as
evisioned by the city’s black middle class.

The vast majority of black migrants demonstrated the important traits
learned during slavery: sacrifice, resourcefulness, ingenuity, and self-sufficiency
to climb the economic ladder and to combat rough times.\textsuperscript{18} One method was
making the family’s clothes. Besides making her own clothes, women made
shawls for the males of the family, which were frequently worn instead of an
overcoat, and knitted stockings for the family, and “when calling they would take
their yarn and knitting needles and talk while knitting, often finishing a sock
while visiting.”\textsuperscript{19} Another method was utilization of their historically intimate
knowledge of the land. Across the Ohio, black farmers, like their fathers and, in
some cases, grandfathers before them, worked the rich soil adjacent to the river
providing alternatives and resources for black people throughout the region. After
relocating with his family from Gallipolis as a teenager to a small farm in
Pomeroy, Ohio (across from Mason County, WV), in the early 1870s, John Jones
recalls one bountiful harvest,

\begin{quote}
Our place yielded abundantly this season, both in fruit and vegetables. We had corn to
fatten four hogs, Mother made plum butter, apple butter, peach butter, and buried enough
cabbage to last for the winter. We had wood on the place, cord wood for the fireplace and
ten tons of coal put in for the winter. The boys gathered walnuts and hickory nuts for our
\end{quote}
little home parties through the winter. We put four barrels of Russet and Roman Beauties in the cellar, besides we had canned fruit, tomatoes, beans and pickles of every description. Thus we were in the position to bid defiance to the hail, sleet and snow.\textsuperscript{20}

Many black residents, no doubt, on both sides of the river hunted, fished, and/or tilled vegetable gardens. And, camp meetings and basket meetings offered regular social opportunities for networking, and the bartering and selling of crops and wares. Moreover, Huntington’s rural surroundings, the vast stretches of forests nourished by the Ohio and Guyandotte rivers and a number of creeks and streams, and verdant valleys replete with wildlife, provided abundant natural resources as sources of nourishment and/or income. Recalling his grandfather’s knowledge and ability to live off the land, Walter Myers relays,

But it’s as I said, we learn from our grand-people. My granddaddy went out there on that hill and they have no money, they took their hands. There was plenty of food out there. Nuts, all kinds of nuts, berries and wild fruit and stuff. It was a living out there. And they [whites] wondered how they [blacks] could go out on that big poor, they called it poor land, and live. See, there was [\textit{sic}] at least four kinds of real good nuts out there. Hickory nuts, they had the soft shells, the big ones, and they had walnuts, two kinds of walnuts: the white looking and the black walnut, and they had beech, well beech is so small but they’re good and flavorful [\textit{sic}]. And there was papaws [\textit{sic}], there was butternut. They cut them trees down first. Lord, I’d give anything for a butternut. It’s a long, rough looking nut, looks like a walnut, oblong. And it’s good, my God. It’s better than the, it’s better than any nut I’ve ever eaten. And uh…so, they had everything out there. There was rabbits, squirrels and raccoons and groundhogs and muskrats, all them things, you could eat all that stuff. So and quail and wild turkey. And when the geese came in, they could kill them. They were plenty
out there to live off. They knew how to live off the land, like the Indians. So...but whenever they raised anything, they always raised something that they could sell to make some extra change to put in this little, they called it a sugar jar or change jar or something. Now some of ‘em had a pouch, they carried it with ‘em.21

Recalling his youth in Danville, Virginia, before relocating to Institute, West Virginia, D. P. Williams, lends support to Myers’ reminiscences when he explains, “Nobody ever went to the store and bought raspberry or blackberry jam. When the season would come in, you’d go to the mountains and you’d pick strawberries or you picked blackberries and you brought those home and your mother or your grandmother made these into preserves and things that were put on the shelves that stayed there all winter.”22

The fond and insightful recollections above are representative of the ways black migrant families regularly utilized their creative talents and familiarity with the land to survive and prosper, and show the enduring strategic importance linked to passing down such knowledge and expertise. In effect, the land offered solace and recreation, food and the future. Importantly, each example also illustrates that both families knew the value of money, and the benefits of saving and frugality (refuting Scott’s depiction) as stepping stones to economic stability and eventually, financial independence. Many black migrant families possessed the cultural knowledge and practical skills to ensure their continued viability, as well as a long-term vision to accomplish their financial goals. In 1868, after his relocation from Charleston to Tupper’s Creek, West Virginia, and the purchase of a small plot of land, Harvey Prillerman started purchasing additional land by
working for “$25 per year on farms, in blacksmith shops and related areas in order to expand his small holdings. He opened a blacksmith shop at Tupper’s Creek, [and] purchased additional land until he owned many acres.”23 Recalling her father and grandfather, Beatrice Cannady relays that after their relocation from Shawsville and Elliston, Virginia, to Kanawha County, “He and my grandfather knew a great deal about the care of animals –a veterinarian he would be called today. He cared for sick animals all through the community.”24 The afore-mentioned Esmond Powell “was a farmer during the week, a preacher on Sunday, [and] a teacher when no other was available. He was skilled with tools. He knew how to use what he could get to do the job.”25 As a boy, Nelson Barnett, Jr., remembers playing in a small building in his side yard. He relays,

A few miscellaneous yard tools were stored there. It was ideal for a playhouse, and so it became. Many years later I was to find out it was one of several which appeared in the nearby countryside. They had been caused to be built by my enterprising great grandfather, the reverent Nelson Barnett. Among his heavenly dreams was interspersed the ideas of creating a Black mercantile empire, of sorts, catering to the staple goods needs of the neighborhoods. He was the buyer, wholesaler and distributor, concurrent with his ministerial duties as a circuit rider. It was the independent chain store concept, in embryonic form.26

Later addressing his great grandfather’s exploits, Barnett states, “He organized and serviced a group of country stores, of the fruit-stand variety, in and around the Ohio, Tug, and Kanawha valleys, where he ministered as an itinerant
preacher. This endeavor appears to have been similar to that of the modern day Independent Grocers’ Association (IGA).”

The above examples suggest the coalescing of farming skills, cultural contacts, and entrepreneurial talents. Speculation suggests Barnett might have been a “pin-holder” or middle-man. These individuals frequently accompanied railroad officials in their quest to secure rights-of-ways, as well as work crews extending or repairing lines. They initiated and utilized their contacts with local farmers to secure agreements to buy farm produce before it went to the market. Usually, they used the discounted produce to feed the crews. However, those more ambitious and savvy took the produce to the market and sold it at a profit which they pocketed. Certainly, both Barnett’s employment with the C. & O. and his travels as a pastor afforded opportunities to develop and nurture contacts with black farmers. To what extent his venture indicates abiding ties to the community is debatable, yet it is instructive that he chose to forego Huntington’s bustling urban-industrial opportunities, largely catering to and controlled by the town’s whites, and center his business in the countryside, offering the goods purchased from black farmers.

Theodore Wilson, the son of former Cabell County emancipated slave George Wilson, used similar entrepreneurial methods. After leaving the teaching profession, which included jobs in Huntington and Cabell County, Wilson returned to Quaker Bottom, Ohio, where he became one of the leading gardeners of the region. He rented land to neighboring farmers and marketed their produce for them in Huntington. One newspaper reporter states, “He had the reputation of
being able to handle such crops with the least loss and to sell them for the best prices of any hucksters of the community.” For years, Wilson operated his service out of a “spic and span” delivery service, and traveled to Huntington markets and groceries in his wagon, with the name of his horse, “Lizzie B,” painted in bright colors on the side.  

The linkages and connections binding Huntington’s black community were affiliated with and a product of Cabell County’s and Huntington’s growth. Cabell County’s general population doubled between 1870 and 1880, increasing to 13,719, as blacks and whites benefited from the local and regional industrial growth. In 1880, Huntington possessed 3,174 individuals, containing 23 percent of the county’s population. The county’s black population increased seven fold from 1870 to 1880, comprising 6.5 percent of the general population and incorporating 890 individuals. Of that number, four hundred and eighty-seven blacks, including ninety-seven (20%) mulattoes, resided in Huntington. In 1880 Huntington’s African American concentration accounted for 55 percent of the county’s black population. The district of Guyandotte Township comprised the second largest African American concentration with 180 (20% of county total), followed by the districts of Guyandotte and Barboursville, respectively.  

Settlement patterns within the county and Huntington reveal the draw of urbanization, jobs, and its affiliated socio-cultural benefits to black migrants:
In 1880 the county’s three main commercial-industrial districts of Huntington, Guyandotte Township, and Barboursville comprised 86 percent of the county’s black population. Only the district of Guyandotte, with its historic black presence, contained a sizable number of black residents (97/11 percent) that could be categorized as predominantly rural. In contrast to the near equal number of blacks and mulattoes in 1870 Barboursville and Guyandotte, the three districts of Huntington, Guyandotte Township, and Barboursville contained overwhelmingly black residential populations in 1880. Owing to their proximity to Chesapeake and Ohio way stations within the county, blacks comprised 80, 92, and 82 percent, respectively, of each district’s total African American population. Of the four districts cited, only Guyandotte possessed more mulattoes than blacks (61/39).
Due to the embryonic nature of formal institutions in the city and county throughout the 1870s, many relied upon the informal networks offered by family, kin, and social contacts to assist, support, and in times of need. County-level census data for 1880 reveals many black households “clustered” around each other, indicating the probable existence of kin and social networks. Of the county’s 90 black households fully 79 (88%) lived within four dwellings of another black household.33

The 1880 census also helps illuminate the status of Huntington’s early black female population. In contrast to the greater numbers prior to the Civil War that had historically existed within the county, Huntington’s industrialization revealed a changing demographic composition. From 1850 to 1870, black females within the county outnumbered black males. In 1880, black men twenty-one and over comprised 62 percent of the city’s black population. Examination of the female population reveals that of the 137 black females thirteen and over, thirty-four (25%) were listed as single. Of the 137, twenty-three (17%) were servants and sixteen (12%) remained “at home,” either as boarders, family, or extended family member. The thirty-four single females were scattered through thirty households, an average of roughly one person per household. Notably, five black households possessed a servant. These numbers suggest that black female labor was valued in Huntington’s emergent urban-industrial milieu.

Census data also helps compare the status of widows versus married women. There were twenty-two widows (16% of black women) spread throughout seventeen households. The five widow-headed households included
twenty-three individuals, comprising 4.6 individuals per household. In an era when increasing numbers of black women ran a boarding house, among the five widow-headed households, only one housed a boarder. Of the eighty-one black households, sixty-three (nearly 78%), were headed by married couples. In contrast to widow-headed households, sixty-five percent (forty-one) of married black couples housed a boarder, an average of 1.5 boarders per household. In contrast to averaging nearly 5 individuals per female-headed households, an average of 2.7 persons per household were found in the sixty-three, two-adult-headed households altogether containing 169 individuals.34

Table 5.3 Population of Huntington, West Virginia 35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>6,429*</td>
<td>3,174</td>
<td>10,108</td>
<td>11,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6,306 (98.1%)</td>
<td>2684 (94.5%)</td>
<td>8,876 (87.8%)</td>
<td>10,709 (89.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>123 (1.9%)</td>
<td>487 (6.5%)</td>
<td>1,231 (12.2%)</td>
<td>1,212 (10.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tenth Census (1880), Eleventh Census (1890), Twelfth Census, (1900). *Figures for 1870 comprise county totals, prior to Huntington’s incorporation.

Table 5.4 African American Population in Ohio Valley Cities, 1870-1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

211
Between 1870 and 1880 average black household size shrank in Huntington. In 1870, black household size in the two most populous districts of Barboursville and Guyandotte averaged five and six, respectively. In 1880 Huntington, average black household size was approximately 5.1 persons, a figure skewed by the fifty-five black railroad laborers residing in two separate company houses, eighteen in one, thirty-seven in the other. Removing these workers reduces household size to 4.6 persons, on par with that of widow-headed households, but slightly below that of female-headed households (5 persons per household). Of the fifteen black-mulatto households in 1880, eleven (73%) involved a black male and a mulatto female. Of the eighty-one married women, eleven (14%) were between mulatto women and black men, while five (.6%) were the reverse, and six (.7%) were between a mulatto male and female. Thus, during Huntington’s first two decades of
existence both black-mulatto households and black-mulatto marriages were more likely to comprise a black male and mulatto female.

Formal racial residential segregation did not exist during the city’s formative years. During Huntington’s early years whites and African Americans lived in close proximity to each other, with many as neighbors. Historian Henry Louis Taylor, commenting on residential spatial organization in antebellum Cincinnati, accurately summarizes the situation in early black Huntington as well:

Blacks were concentrated but did not live in homogenous, racially segregated neighborhoods. They shared the living space with whites from various ethnic groups and social classes. The houses of the rich and the hovels of the poor stood within a stone’s throw of each other. Many blacks and whites huddled together in wretched neighborhoods. And almost everywhere dwelling units coexisted with stores, offices, shops, warehouses, and factories. No one group could claim the living space as its own. In such a setting, the riveting of African American behavior to “place” could not occur.38

Although the nature of urban living forced an integrated circumstance, many of the city’s blacks, like African Americans nationwide, sought out and relished life in a segregated environment. Throughout the 1870s and 1880s, Huntington enjoyed a lively socio-cultural scene beyond church attendance, revealing some class stratification. Initiated by locals and outsiders, and covered by local newspapers, Inghams Hall was a regular haunt throughout the 1870s and 80s; Burdick’s Hall was another. In 1873 Johnston’s Hall, on Second Avenue, hosted a concert and balls.39 The availability of these venues offered cultural space that allowed psychic and physical distance from whites.
Speaking on black Cincinnati, Taylor provides important perspective: “It would be a mistake to conclude that the pervasiveness of racism meant that blacks were consumed with white machinations… African Americans lived in a social universe apart from whites. The sights, sounds, smells, rhythms, melodies, and improvisations of black life existed independent of the white world and gave shape, form, texture and vibrancy to black Cincinnati.” For most Huntington residents and migrants, life in segregated environments provided the “distance” and space necessary to combat the indignities and start life anew. Perhaps, African American pastor Reverend Williams, of Gallipolis, Ohio, summarized this attitude best: “I do not believe in social equality; it cannot be; but we all must learn to keep to our own road, and bear Christian good will towards each other.”

One newspaper article, commenting on black response, helps to convey the complexity of it. “Huntington was again visited by fire on Tuesday morning last… It was also noticed that the colored people, as a general thing refused to help [put out the fire]. Mr Kennert’s Bob, Mr. Scrange’s Porter and a few others worked nobly, but most of them stood idle.” Given that other newspaper articles cite inter-racial cooperation in battling fires, it is noteworthy when black people failed to assist. The article makes explicit three points: that black people were expected to participate in efforts to save white property, that Bob and Porter are referenced as if they were property, and that some black Huntingtonians, for whatever reason, elected not to assist.

For many who weathered the crisis of 1873 and the transition, the beginning of the new decade promised change for the better. Prior to 1880, no black
property holders existed in the town. From 1880 to 1885 valuation of real estate increased by 25 percent for the county, while the increase in Huntington was nearly 50 percent. For that same period the valuation of personal property for the county increased 72 percent, while within Huntington it was over 100 percent. Significant numbers of Huntington’s black residents contributed to and benefited from this rise. From 1880 to 1890, 23 purchased property within the city, of which 22 were men, including migrants Reverend Nelson Barnett and now contractor W.O. James, railroad brakeman J.A. Mangrum, hotel porter Si Manson, Caroline Holley, and former Cabell County slave and “roustabout” William Black’s, a notable achievement in any light. Most purchased property in the residential districts south of the railroad. Early black resident William O. James farmed a large tract of land south of the C & O railroad tracks.

In the absence of a moneyed elite or petite bourgeoisie, or formal benevolent or fraternal organizations, which might have provided models to emulate as well as strategic and/or financial support (or conversely, constricted and constrained their ambitions), these twenty-three property holders help symbolize the power of African American economic aspiration. Moreover, prominent black Huntingtonian J.W. Scott noted that eighteen still held their properties twenty years later. Emblematic of efforts by black laborers nationally to improve their economic status, these accomplishments represent an important step in the economic development of black Huntington. From 1890 to 1900, 33 more blacks bought homes, worth an aggregate $80,000, double the value purchased the previous decade. While the primary purchasers of real estate were members of the
working class, several members of the professional class bought property, including Doctor W.S. Kerney, Attorney W.H. Harris, and two of Barnett’s children, Professor C. H. Barnett, and teacher Josephine Barnett. Some may have been assisted by the Afro-American Improvement Company, launched in 1895, which possibly provided organized efforts at land acquisition. However, notably, Nelson and Josie Barnett, Susie James, W. T. McKinney, Ida Pack and Byrd Prillerman, were among those who sold to cover real estate taxes.

Given the inchoate yet expanding nature of early industrial Huntington, the tenuous financial status of many black migrants, and the preponderance of black laborers, examination of early black residential patterns is merited. However, this is made difficult by three facts: first, as already noted, no black property owners existed prior to 1880; second, the “Great Flood of 1884,” which devastated the city, especially the commercial district; and third, no complete extant city directories could be found for any years prior to 1891-2, a possible consequence of the flood. What is known is that during the first years of the town, a number of black laborers lived adjacent to the gates of the Chesapeake and Ohio shops (outside of the commercial core) situated on part of the land purchased by C. P. Huntington under the auspices of his Central Land Company. Consisting of two rows of houses, one of brick and one of frame, the Company Row, fronting on Eighth Avenue east of Twenty-First Street was first used by the engineers and other employees during the period of the construction of the shops and afterwards the houses were converted into dwellings and rented to C. & O employees. In the
same end of town quite a number of black and white individuals and families resided on the south side of the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad near the entrance to the shops. This neighborhood was known as “the Patch.” Some migrants lived in railroad housing near the banks of the Ohio near Second Avenue and in some of the emerging streets and alleyways of the downtown section.\textsuperscript{50} In 1896, one newspaper article describes the neighborhood, “What is known as the C. & O. Patch is quite a little village of itself. Neat white houses and good gardens are the rule. The residents are mechanics and working men, thrifty and economical and belong to the law and order class.”\textsuperscript{51} Eventually, by the early twentieth century, the Patch stretched east and west along 8\textsuperscript{th} Avenue from Twenty-Fifth to Twenty-Ninth Street, and north and south from the railroad to 9\textsuperscript{th} avenue along Twenty-Seventh and Twenty-Eighth streets.\textsuperscript{52}

One lasting ramification of capitalism and industrialization was the development of untold numbers of men, women, and children, African Americans and whites, who, engaged in criminal activity. Crime cut across racial and class divisions. Young black males, many of whom were either unemployed or underemployed, not surprising are frequently cited as the perpetrators of many of these acts. Common are newspaper accounts of thievery by black youths of food, livestock, wood and coal, items that comprised the staples of life for the era. Reflecting the scholarly debate over the slave-era practice of “taking” versus “stealing,” many black migrants seem to have committed crimes to feed
themselves or their families.53 Many wandered the streets as vagrants, some turned occasionally to crime, others exclusively so. Some found jobs.

Others youngsters were fortunate to find safe haven. After abandonment by his father, of whom “nothing is known of his antecedents or history,” four-year-old Henry Dickerson was placed into the Lawrence County Children’s Home by his mother. Three years later, in July 1888, Cincinnati natives Amos and Annie L. James adopted the boy. After the death of their parents, John and Vicki Edwards, within two years of each other, brothers Harry and James, aged thirteen and nine found themselves in the Home in 1884. Unable or unwilling to be the guardian, their sixty-six year old grandmother Mary Haley, the former Cabell County free woman, and now Portsmouth, Ohio, resident, oversaw their placement in the home. In 1888, after a four year stay, both boys found homes with adoptive parents within four months of each other.54

Another issue city leaders struggled with was vagrancy. Continuing migrant influx from varied cultural backgrounds, improving material conditions for some and the lack of it for others, and economic disparities between white and black people created tensions and opportunities. Like municipal authorities nationwide, Huntington’s white leaders, seeking to distance themselves from both the poor and the black, developed laws to protect their power and property, while simultaneously perpetuating the subordinate status of those on the bottom. Moreover, lacking any incentive to examine the nature of inequities attendant to Huntington’s blossoming industrial economy, the city’s white civilians (like those nationwide) also sought distance, and thus lacked any overriding impulse to
distinguish the poor from the criminal. Historian Edward Ayers notes the significance of this mindset, “Respectable citizens in the nineteenth century did not always distinguish between paupers and criminals: the two together made up the ‘dangerous class’ that threatened the very fabric of social order. Poverty, in the nineteenth century, came to be defined as ‘abnormal’; it was a social problem, something to be explained and, if possible, eliminated. This was supposedly a rich country, a land of opportunity. Economic failure, then, must be due to moral failure; pauperism was, in short, close kin to actual crime.”

The inability to contain and curtail black crime by the authorities as well as adequately address increasing vagrancy by black people produced anxiety in some whites concerned over the possible damage to Huntington’s image and prospective prosperity. One article noted, “Huntington is fast earning an unenviable notoriety in the existence of unpunished crime. There are at least fifty Negroes about the town now, who are amenable to the vagrant law, and it should be strictly enforced. They do not rely on labor to support them, and are compelled to resort to crime.” Another, more pointed in its assessment, remarked, “There is at present in this city a party of Negroes, to whom a tour in the Chain-gang, or several months service on the treadmills would be an act of charity, in the absence of even a semblance of a sufficient police force, to protect the property of our citizens.” In truth, Huntington’s economic success bred its crime and vagrancy issues, and black migrant laborers were frequently seen as the root of the problem. Black workers unable or unwilling to adapt to the demands of capitalistic society, who fell through the cracks were seen as threats to society, as idlers, rootless, and,
perhaps, more importantly, corrupt. Some support for this contention is found in a mandate issued by Huntington’s chief of police in 1895. Fed up with crime tied to loiterers and gambling dens, the chief called the entire police force into headquarters and issued a mandate “that all men black and white…. without visible means of support, be arrested.”\textsuperscript{58} Thus, like many cities throughout the South, city authorities resorted to “blanket” vagrancy laws as a means to deal with its black migrant population.

By 1890, the city’s black population had increased three-fold from 1880, and now comprised 1,231 residents, 82 percent of the county’s 1,493 black inhabitants. During this era, although black residential settlement was dispersed throughout the city, four pockets of greater concentration existed, two north of the C & O Railroad line running between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, and the other south of the line. The first, found within and adjacent to the city’s central business district, radiated away from the Ohio River from Second to Seventh Avenue, and from First to Fourteenth streets. Comprised of sixteen categories of central business functions: wholesale, retail, manufacturing and artisan, religious and educational institutions, professional service, financial institutions, administrative establishments, hotels and boarding houses, private dwelling units, warehouses, personal service and entertainment, and multi-purpose establishments (engaging in wholesale, retail, and manufacturing activities), this area housed large numbers of black laborers, domestics, and other unskilled and semi-skilled workers, as well as a number of widows.\textsuperscript{59} They lived in this area for two primary reasons: cost and proximity. Intermingled within the commercial, service, and industrial
businesses were affordable housing/rooming options which offered short walking
distances to jobs and social/entertainment options.

In 1895 ninety-four black residents lived within the Central Business
District, with the largest concentration found along Third Avenue, the city’s
oldest residential thoroughfare. Housing forty adult black residents, Third Avenue
held more than triple the number living on any other street within the district, and
also held two black owned businesses, barber shops owned by John P. Brown and
Charles Seals. The vast majority of those residing in the district were black
migrants who arrived after 1880, and whose socioeconomic status, presumably,
locked them into utilizing rudimentary housing opportunities for a time before
moving on. It is impossible to ascertain what factor or factors impacted the status
and, thus, settlement patterns of black laborers more, but it is noteworthy that only
a very few of the city’s early black migrants resided in the district in 1895. In fact,
of black migrants cited in the 1880 federal census, only two, early black migrant
Caroline Holley and laborer Albert Jackson resided there in 1895.60

Interestingly, Huntington’s black population actually dropped from 1890 to
1900, reversing the upward trend since from 1870. While the city’s general
population expanded over the decade, the numbers of black residents shrank
during this period, from 1,231 to 1,212. No one answer accounts for this drop, yet
several factors may be attributable. First, construction of the Chesapeake and
Ohio line from Barboursville to Logan and that of the Norfolk and Western from
Logan to Kenova probably drew workers from Huntington, a point reinforced by
the growth of the county’s black population during the decade. Second, the Panic
of 1893 may be a factor as it forced the temporary closing of the Chesapeake and Ohio shops, the largest employer of black railroad laborers within the city. Third, the proportional increase of white migrant influx relative to black increase during the decade and resultant job competition in a tight labor market may have reduced available employment options for black laborers. Fourth, given the loss of jobs and increasing job competition, some black laborers might have relocated to the emergent coal mining region of southern West Virginia.

Black and white migrants and residents too poor to afford better housing lived in alley dwellings and in undesirable areas on the fringes of development. One interracial enclave on the fringe was known as Buffington Row, and an examination of its population provides clues to the nature of migrant life. In 1895, of its 24 residents, 17 were African American. Of the nine males, seven were laborers and two barbers. Of the eight women within “the Row,” six were widows. Given the relatively high income of the era’s barbers and the presumably stable economic status of the widows, the presence of these two groups calls into question what factors, economics, race, or some other contingency, defined residency. In contrast to the occupational status of white workers, all cited as laborers, black workers encompassed a broader occupational range of domestics, laborers, and barbers.

Situated on Seventh Avenue between Sixteenth and Twentieth Streets, this parcel of land, was one of several owned by prominent white businessman Peter C. Buffington. Several newspaper articles portray an area rife with crime and squalor. One newspaper declared, “Police Again Called to Disorderly Buffington
Row,” before continuing, “The people of the notorious Buffington row [sic] gathered together last night and, as usual, a general free for all fight took place. Knives, knucks, hatchets and almost everything, save gatling [sic] guns were brought into use and this morning when the police visited the scene that locality had the resemblance of a Chicago slaughter house.” Later that year, another article states, “A great nuisance is complained of by citizens of Seventh [A]venue and Locus [A]venue, on account of the accumulation, of filth, from stables, hog pens, and out houses between Sixteenth and Twentieth streets on the alley between Buffington row and Seventh avenue [sic]. The attention of the health officer is publicly called to this matter.” Another article relays, “The alley back of Buffington row is certainly in a very filthy condition, and should be renovated at once, or the sick list and death rate below Twentieth street will be greatly increased this summer.”

As of the mid-1890s, however, neither Buffington Row, nor any other area within the city, constituted a black ghetto resembling those of the mid-twentieth century. Within these areas, all were subject to inferior housing, higher incidence of disease, and higher mortality rates but blacks also faced the subtle additional burden of racial discrimination, a dynamic that may have reinforced the “congregational” instinct of black migrant settlement. In this manner Huntington mirrored other Ohio River valley towns during the era. Commenting on these towns, one authority relays, “The formation of more rigid lines dividing neighborhoods by race came gradually—a product of whites’ greater residential mobility and blacks’ limited occupational and educational opportunities and of
formal restrictions live restrictive covenants on the sale, rental, and leasing of property. Much more powerful though, was word-of-mouth-communicated understandings about where blacks could live and occasional acts of retribution, including violence against those who broke those rules."67

Located in the west end of Huntington, adjacent to Central City (incorporated in 1893) and stretching west to east from Second to Tenth Street along Eighth Avenue, and from Second to Eighth Street on Ninth Avenue, lay the third locale of black residential concentration. Situated on the southern side of the C & O tracks, this area contained a smattering of black unskilled and semi-skilled workers mostly concentrated in small residential pockets around the major intersections of Second, Sixth, and Eighth Streets. The lack of the 1890 federal census data hampers analysis of family and social networks and their impact on black migrant influx and residence in black residential enclaves, yet there is some evidence of ongoing social/kin networks within this area. In 1891/2 laundress and early black migrant Martha Carter lived with her daughters Cora and Virginia in the alley between 7th and 8th streets and 3rd and 4th avenues, while her teamster son Henry lived at 1831 Virginia Avenue in Huntington’s west end.68 By 1895, after her daughters had relocated elsewhere, she and Henry, now a cook, relocated to rear 213 Eighth Avenue, where they shared their home with bricklayer and probable boarder William Craney. Barber Moss Perdue resided at rear 622 Eighth Avenue with hostler Robert Moss and laborers Robert Henderson and Charles Scott. At 217 rear Ninth Avenue resided Nettie Davis, Mrs. Lettie (also referred to as Lottie) McQueen and laborer John McGee. Barber Henry Smith and laborers
Robert West and William Hawkins resided at rear 621 Ninth, and rooming at 629 Ninth were barbers Jeff and Reuben Quarles, and laborer Henry Sneeze. The area also supported, at least for a time, two black owned restaurants, one run by John Stephens at 210 Eighth Street, and the other by Daniel and Moses Butler at 220 Eighth Street.69

In Huntington’s west end, near the C & O lines, lay the fourth area of black residential concentration, stretching west to east from Sixteenth to Twentieth Street, and north to south three blocks, comprising Railroad, Eighth and Artisan Avenues. Considering its truncated length, three blocks long, and the fact that eighteen of its nineteen black residents were black laborers (with widower Sarah Waltz, the exception), available evidence indicates Railroad Avenue was probably constructed by the C & O Railroad to house newly arrived laborers.

As the oldest residential and most critical main road in the enclave, Eighth Avenue contained a substantially larger and occupationally diverse presence than Railroad or Artisan Avenues. Living among the numbers of unskilled and semi-skilled workers were grocer W. T. Merchant, contractor W.O. James, and teacher W. T. McKinney. Containing the second largest black concentration within the city at sixty residents, this enclave would increasingly comprise black Huntington’s population core throughout the length of this study. Part of this circumstance is attributable to the development of black institutions adjacent to and within the enclave, including the location of Ebenezer United Methodist Church and Douglass High School. Evidence of social/kin networks include that of the Myers family, Charles, Edward, Henrietta, and Walter residing at 1670
Eighth with Arthur Wilson, laborers Lewis Farrow and Alfred Hopewell living at 1674 Eighth, and Trent and Amanda Jenkins at 1705 Eighth. Stretching from Sixteenth to Twentieth, Artisan Avenue contained fourteen black residents, all unskilled laborers. In contrast to the overt social/kin networks on Eighth or Ninth Avenue corridors, only laborer A. Winston and helper Jude Peters resided in the same household, offered evidence of explicit social/kin linkages found on Artisan.  

Examination of black residential settlement patterns in the mid-1890s reveals that, save for Buffington Row a broad uniformity existed with the city’s black working class population. In effect, the compacted nature of occupational diversity limited upward mobility and residential opportunities for the bulk of Huntington’s black migrants. Although large numbers had obtained stable jobs and were improving their material position, with a few even purchasing property, constraints and barriers existed. However, it is important that there were choices as evidenced by the interracial composition of black enclaves. At the close of the nineteenth century, Huntington’s black citizens were spread throughout the city, and firmly ensconced within it, living adjacent to or in close proximity to black and white, rich and poor. Thus, settlement patterns seem to be a function of cost and proximity to jobs, family and/or social networks, and black institutions.

While isolated pockets of black residents existed in and out of Huntington’s commercial district from its incorporation in 1871, the bulk of the city’s black residential population grew increasingly more centralized away from this core throughout the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In 1900, the
bulk of Huntington’s population resided within three wards (see Map 4). Ward I encompassed the commercial core and extended from the Ohio River to Ninth Avenue, bounded by Third Street, the city’s corporation line to the west, and Eighth Street to the east. Ward 2, the smallest ward, also extended from the river down to Ninth Avenue, but extended out to Twelfth Street. Extending from the river as well, but stopping at Eighth Avenue before continuing east from Sixteenth Street on to Guyandotte, Ward 3 contained the highest concentration of black residents at 451. Ward 1 with 426 individuals comprised the second largest total, followed by Ward 2, with 105. Average household size per ward totaled 5.5, 4.6, and 3.7, respectively illustrating the demographic gradations extant within Huntington’s black residential population. Located closer to the city’s oldest section and core residential area, Ward 1 contained a preponderance of families, and thus the highest average household size. While closely replicating the demographics of Ward 1, Ward 2 contained families of smaller household size, perhaps reflective of the financial pressures affiliated with residing in the newer neighborhoods and more expensive housing in the ward. Ward 3 was overwhelmingly white and middle-class, and contained the largest number of black domestics, a significant number of single railroad laborers, as well as the smallest household size.

However, a number of black-owned businesses remained in the city’s commercial core, including black-owned saloons, frequently to the consternation of city officials. The local press portrayed these black-owned saloons, such as the “Loop de Loop,” the “Muddy Duck,” and the “Honky Tonk,” as “notorious” and
“infamous,” homes to crime, vice, and prostitution.\textsuperscript{71} These haunts, found in the Tenderloin district, catered to and employed both black and white, including women of both races, a circumstance that inflamed the ire of the some city council members and white merchants’ intent upon elevating the positive attributes of the city as well as reining in “negro saloons” and “crap joints.”\textsuperscript{72}

No one drew greater ire than Ed McDaniels (also cited as McDaniel), whose exploits help illuminate the ways in which some members of the black working class attempted to navigate and negotiate the shifting boundaries of power, class, and race within the city. Born in 1866, the West Virginian native arrived into Huntington around 1890 with his wife, Lizzie, and their two children, and obtained a job as a restaurant cook. From his arrival forward, McDaniels, referred to by one local newspaper as a “negro of unsavory fame, seems to have straddled the line between the lawful and unlawful, favor and connection, with equal aplomb.\textsuperscript{73} Over a five-year period, his business ventures included the opening of a barber shop in the late 1890s, and the saloons “Loop de Loop” and the “Muddy Duck,” cited by one local newspaper as “veritable hot beds of all manner of crime, conducted with the full knowledge and consent of the police in the city.”\textsuperscript{74} Criminal activity in his establishments, or in close proximity, occurred regularly, including at least one incident in which two brothers attempted to shoot McDaniels in the “Honky Tonk.”\textsuperscript{75}

McDaniels’ clientele primarily included those who occupied the lowest economic rungs of the occupational ladder, no matter the race or gender. As one authority notes about Atlanta, “Domestic laborers and others escaped from their
workaday worries through dance in ‘jook joints’ and settings also referred to as ‘dives.’ These were among the most (re)creative sites of black working-class amusements at the turn of century, where old and new cultural forms, exhibiting both African and European influences, were syncretized.”76 Patrons undoubtedly included many black laborers who shifted between periods of employment and unemployment, and those categorized as vagrants, loiterers, and transients by city authorities. While most may have survived by taking jobs as day laborers, others engaged in a sub-economy that included gambling, prostitution and petty theft.

Recalling the exploits of black Huntingtonians who spent time gambling on riverboats, Edna Duckworth states, “Sam Graves and Lee Overstreet made money gambling. If constables got after them, they would move from state to state.”77 Commenting on “The Other Black Cincinnati,” “the shadow community” that existed on Cincinnati’s riverfront area during the late-1860s, historian Nikki M. Taylor, explains, “Many of the same people who occupied the lowest economic and social rungs of society also occupied the lowest moral rungs because of their involvement in illegal, illicit, or otherwise unsanctioned activity. And because many of them persisted in such activities, they were considered ‘Pariahs, Sudras, outcasts’ and inhabited the shadows of Cincinnati society.”78

Some insight into the local sub-culture is gained from Duckworth’s account of Logan, West Virginia, native Kirk “Brother” Davis. As a young teenager, he worked two jobs, as a barber with his father, as well as at the Pioneer Hotel. His off hours were spent at the local pool hall, where he racked balls, performed odd jobs, and “stood on bee cases to shoot,” frequently playing miners who thought
they could best “the kid.” In the early 1900s, around the age of eighteen, while his father worked at the Island Creek Coal Company, Davis relocated to Catlettsburg, Kentucky, where he ran a barber shop/pool hall, situated a few blocks off of Front Street. In the off hours, he honed his game. On one occasion, Davis won a game over a miner who refused to pay script wager, eliciting the ire of Simp Thompson, one local henchman, who was sitting in the barber’s chair. “At this time,” Duckworth relays, “there was no money but script. Brother bought and sold script, made $1.25 for a $1.00.” As the conversation grew more heated, “The miner argued loud and wrong,” so much so, Thompson called Davis over and stated, “Here Kirk, take this gun and blow the hell out of the damn nigger.” Won’t anybody do anything about it.”

Duckworth’s account provides insight into the nature of social interaction in the “hidden” spaces where migrants and locals recreated, and the ways many engaged in legitimate and illicit activities to climb the economic ladder.

As long as those sites comprising the illegal and illicit remained few, self-contained and localized, Huntington city authorities provided tacit approval. Although there is no direct evidence of their patronage, the location of these venues in the heart of Huntington’s commercial district, almost certainly attracted social and perhaps political contacts, black and white. In effect, both his barber shop and clubs provided McDaniel’s ample networking opportunities. As early as mid-1899, there is evidence that he sought to capitalize upon these connections. Commenting on McDaniel’s response to the “undelivered plums” from the local Republican Party for work done on behalf of the party in the black community, a
local newspaper reported, “… that it was he who brought success to the republican ticket in Huntington last spring, and that he had been promised great things as his reward.” Cited as “a valuable ally of the administration,” McDaniels also seems to have curried the favor of the mayor and city council. Over the public outcry of white business owners, the city’s eight councilmen approved his license application to establish a saloon at 839 Second Avenue next to the white owned Merchant’s Hotel. His efforts seem to have produced positive results, for less than a year later, he had purchased a small dwelling in the alley between Third and Fourth avenues and Seventh and Eighth streets for $400.  

Notwithstanding the fact that public opinion also viewed a small number of white-owned establishments as notorious as well, including one resort referred to as “one of the most damnable dives in the city,” located at 817 Second Avenue and run by white proprietress Dorsey Brown, the centralized presence of a few saloons under black proprietorship, and their depiction as “dens of vices,” prompted the Huntington Advertiser to admonish the local authorities for utter disregard of the law in policing the “ape yard on Eighth Street.” Eventually, continuing crime and violence associated with McDaniels and his establishments, as well as those operated by Sam Graves, Ike Miller, and T. J. Tarrer, affected a concerted backlash, and in November 1904, the city council debated the revocation of his liquor license. Pointing out the hypocrisy of the city’s white citizens in defense of McDaniels, while simultaneously proclaiming his objectivity, white city councilman John Farr “upbraided” the mayor stating, “… it was a matter of persecution on the part of some citizens to not grant the negroes
of the city the same privileges that are accorded to the white inhabitants."82 One month later, S.F. Blake, the white proprietor of Merchant’s Hotel, renewed his efforts to shut down the Honky Tonk. Speaking before the city council, Blake testified that:

…[H]e had seen the whiskey and beer sold there on Sunday, and after twelve o’clock at night; that he had seen one shooting affair in the place and had heard of many more; that had been cutting scrapes and fights innumerable; that one woman was knocked by a burly negro into a tub of water, that a piano which kept going day and night rendered life hideous for himself and his guests; that there was constant cursing and brawling; that five or six women were kept there all the time; that they frequently appeared at the windows of the place lacking even the traditional fig leaf, much to the annoyance of himself and his guests; that robberies were often committed there; that guests of his hotel were afraid to sleep in the rooms of his hotel…for fear that some of the stray bullets that fly about the place would pierce the fragile walls and result in serious injury; and that the existence of the joint had been very detrimental to the prosperity of his hotel.

Blake’s testimony served as the beginning of the end for the Honky Tonk. Over the next two months, police raids generated by coalescing public opinion and council disapproval demonstrated that McDaniels and his club would no longer be tolerated. On February 21, 1905, the Honky Tonk closed its doors forever.83

That black migrants/residents of Huntington accomplished what they did is remarkable. From the creation of the town, newspapers disparaged them.84 While
in 1879, *Strauder v. West Virginia* made it illegal for blacks to participate in juries, no blacks served for the first 60 years in the city’s history.85

Still, there was a modicum of justice and efforts at reasonableness evident in Huntington for black residents that were not replicated elsewhere. During this time period, there was one lynching in Huntington in 1876 involving a black man accused of murdering the husband of her white lover, with her help.86 There were twenty-eight lynchings in the state during these years, and in several instances, local officials averted lynching efforts by getting the accused black man out of town and to another jail before the mob could organize.87 When whites (even police officers) were accused of crimes against the black community, they were regularly brought to justice.88 And when blacks committed crimes against other blacks, white officials pursued justice as in any other case.89

In significant ways, Cincinnati’s and Huntington’s waterfront black communities, though situated in two separate time periods, encompassed the same populations’. Whereas Cincinnati’s comprised those bound to the city’s antebellum riverfront economy, Huntington’s bound those tied to the city’s post-bellum railroad-based economy, and to a lesser extent, its nascent river-based economy. Bound largely by their class and occupational status, black and white, men and women, existed in an uneasy, sometimes violent, and fluid collaboration, and not infrequently, cohabitation. For a time, McDaniels’ purposeful navigation of the alternative spaces within Huntington’s economy demonstrated that those operating within working-class constraints could achieve success and stature.
Throughout the late-nineteenth century, increasing numbers of black
migrants settled into Huntington. Fundamental to the founding and evolution of
black Huntington was the recognition by large numbers of black migrants that
their fates and aspirations were bound by their linkages and connections to others,
and the commonality of their history. Segregation and racism bound them. From
its incorporation, white Huntingtonians found ways to denigrate, stereotype, and
humiliate the town’s African Americans. Importantly, though, Huntington missed
the profound economic, political, and social upheaval associated with
Reconstruction. During an era in which resurgent white racism manifested
terrorism and inflicted violence throughout the South, Huntington’s blacks never
faced concerted mob action by the city’s whites. And, while it may have been
biased and even racist, the rule of law reigned over the city, providing confidence
to black and white alike. In essence, Afro-Huntingtonians were the beneficiaries
of a city in flux, a circumstance that stopped the implementation of formalized
measures that restricted and constrained black residential settlement patterns.

Consequently, black Huntingtonian’s settled throughout the town, into
alleys, streets, and neighborhoods that scores would call home. With the arrival of
increasing numbers came a concomitant increase in the number of those
purchasing property. Naturally, not all prospered. Many failed to meet their
expectations and the dictates of post-Reconstruction urban-industrial society, and
fell on hard times, with some existing on the edges of society, insecure and
vulnerable. Attendant to this process was the development of nascent intra-class
schisms, which complicated the quest to forge community. Undoubtedly, racism
impacted and impeded black aspiration. Thus, it is all the more impressive, given this reality, that the bulk of black migrants endured and prospered, successfully adapting and adjusting to their new socio-economic circumstance as citizens. Demonstrating agency against the forces and individuals arrayed against them, black Huntingtonian’s fought, literally and emblematically, for the right to live life of their own choosing. Fundamental to this process was black institutional development--the growth of black churches, schools, and fraternal/benevolent associations needed to bring about black Huntington’s socio-cultural metamorphosis, a topic examined in the next chapter.
5 Ibid., 363.
7 Encyclopedia of Sociology, 362.
9 Encyclopedia of Sociology, 360.
13 The Huntington Advertiser, November 19, 1874.
14 “Grand Masked Ball,” The Huntington Advertiser, December 30, 1875.
15 Scott, “Progress of the Huntington Negro,” 3.
16 This term was taken from William Toll’s article “Free Men, Freedmen, and Race: Black Social Theory in the Gilded Age,” The Journal of Southern History, Vol. 44, no. 4 (Nov., 1978): 571-598. Williams spoke at length about the social reform that he felt necessary for the successful acclimation of Negroes into society.
18 Booker T. Washington’s recollections of his mother’s efforts to feed her family in antebellum Virginia add perspective. “Some people blame the Negro for not being more honest; but I can recall many times when, after all was dark and still, in the late hours of the night, when her children had been without food during the day, my mother would awaken us, and we would find that she had gotten from somewhere something in the way of eggs or chickens and cooked the food during the night for us. These eggs and chickens were gotten without my ma ster’s permission or knowledge. Perhaps, by some code of ethics, this would be classed as stealing, but deep down in my heart I can never decide that my mother, under such circumstances, was guilty of theft. Had she acted thus as a free woman she would have been a thief, but not so, in my opinion, as a slave. After our freedom no one was stricter than my mother in teaching and observing the highest rules of integrity.” Booker T. Washington, An Autobiography: The Story of My Life and Work (Toronto, Ont., Naperville, IL, Atlanta, GA: J.L. Nichols, & Company, 1901), 14-15.
20 Ibid., 24.

23 Mrs. Lottie Prillerman Morris, “Harvey Prillerman Family,” *Celebrating our Roots*, 12.


28 Term “pin-holding” and job description provided by Wallace Haymer. See Wallace Haymer, interviewed by Timothy Olson, *Oral History of Appalachia Project and Drinko Foundation*, Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, April 10, 1975, file 114.


32 Ibid., 2.


34 Some discussion is merited given the disparity in household size between female-headed and two-adult headed households and the historical assumptions that have accompanied female-headed households. In his 1939 classic thesis E. Franklin Frazier advanced two key assertions which were revived in the 1965 Moynihan Report: First as a result of slavery and continued discrimination, an alarming proportion of black families were “matriarchal,” that is, the husband/father was either absent or present but of negligible influence. Second, the woman-dominant family was unbalanced and disorganized, both the symptom and cause of profound social pathology among black people. As scholars began to check the matriarchy image in the 1970s for historical accuracy the Frazier-Moynihan thesis came under heavy fire. And yet as Suzanne Lebsock argues, “the historians, too, reinforced the prevailing prejudice against female-headed households. Working for the most part with census data from the second half of the nineteenth century, several historians found that female-headed households were far outnumbered by two-parent households. This, along with additional evidence of the statistical insignificance of the woman-headed household, was offered in defense of the historic Afro-American family: Black families were not generally matriarchal/matrifocal/female-headed (the term varies); therefore, they were not disorganized, unstable, or otherwise pathological after all.” See Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1740-1860* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), 88-89. For greater insight on the Franklin-Moynihan thesis, see E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), and Daniel P. Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor, 1965).

35 Table shows that although black population grew in absolute numbers, it declined proportionally to the white population.


39 *The Huntington Independent*, October 16, 1873 and October 23, 1873.


41 “Story of Reverend Williams, Aged 76, Colored Methodist Minister,” *WPA in Ohio*, Federal Writer’s Project, July 8, 1937, by Miriam Logan, 111.

42 *The Huntington Advertiser*, July 29, 1875.

43 *Tenth Census of the United States*, 1880.


“Sale of Real Estate for Taxes,” Huntington Advertiser, November 15, 1895.


Linda Hepler, “The C & O Patch: Remembering a Huntington Neighborhood,” Goldenseal, summer 1986, 16, Special Collections, Cabell County Public Library, Huntington, WV.


Martha J. Kouse, Annotated Lawrence County, Ohio Children’s Home Register, 1874-1926 (Milford, OH: Little Miami Publishing Co., 2003), Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, OH, 44.


The Huntington Advertiser, December 3, 1874.

Ibid. December 19, 1874.

“Chief Turner’s Orders,” The Huntington Advertiser, December 17, 1895.


Tenth Census of the United States, 1880, and Huntington West Virginia Directory, 1895-6. The cited numbers do not include examination of pages 25 or 40 which were damaged and are indecipherable. A domestic and unknown occupation constituted the remaining two.


Ibid. June 24, 1896.


Bigham, On Jordan’s Banks, 119.

Huntington, West Virginia Directory, 1891-1892, 16.


Ibid., and Huntington, West Virginia, March 1893, Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1893, Cabell County Public Library, Special Collections, Huntington, WV.
For “Loop de Loop” and “Muddy Duck,” see The Huntington Advertiser, April 24, 1903; for “Honky Tonk,” see The Huntington Advertiser, December 8, 1903.

The Huntington Advertiser, February 12, 1903.

Ibid., December 8, 1903.

Ibid., April 25, 1903.

Ibid., November 9, 1904.

Hunter, To ‘Joy My Freedom, 171.

Edna Duckworth, personal recollections written October 10, 1994, transcript in possession of author.


Duckworth, personal recollections.

“Nothing but a Stone,” Huntington Advertiser, June 10, 1899, Huntington Advertiser, December 8, 1899, and “Building Permits,” Huntington Advertiser, November 4, 1904.

Ibid., “One of the most,” October 8, 1900; “dens of vices” and “ape yard,” August 27, 1904. Though not addressed as such in the article, the citation may refer to the club, Ape Yard, operated by Sam Graves and Ike Miller.

Ibid. November 22, 1904. Other articles include November 22 and 26, 1904, and December 5, 1904.

Ibid. February 21, 1905.

See The Huntington Advertiser, June 11, 1874, September 24, 1874, March 11, 1875, and January 16, 1876.

Convicted of murdering his wife, Taylor Strauder’s attorneys sought to have the decision set aside because no African Americans were on the jury which condemned him. Denied upon appeal in the U.S. Circuit Court, the case was argued before the U.S. Supreme Court, which reversed the decision rendered by the Supreme Court of West Virginia, and ordered that Strauder be given a new trial. See Lawrence N. Jones, “The Civil Status of Negroes in West Virginia as Reflected in Legislative Acts and Judicial Decisions, 1860-1940,” (master’s thesis, University of Chicago, 1948), 25. For information on jury composition, see Common Pleas Law Criminal Record, Cabell County Circuit Court, Book #1, April 10, 1893-July 19, 1895, Common Pleas Law Criminal Record, Cabell County Circuit Court, Book #2, November 4, 1895-April 21, 1898, Common Pleas Law Criminal Record, Cabell County Circuit Court, Book #3, April 21, 1898-December 31, 1900, Common Pleas Law Criminal Record, Cabell County Circuit Court, Book #4, January 17, 1901-July 21, 1902. Earlier records destroyed in court house fire in Barboursville. See also “Negroes Serve on Phipps Jury,” The Huntington Herald-Dispatch, September 22, 1931.

Huntington Herald-Dispatch, February 14, 1909.

Ancella Bickley Livers, “The Greenbrier Lynching: A Study of West Virginia Justice,” (n.p., 1993), Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV. Livers’ (now Bickley) acknowledges some discrepancy on exact numbers in her three sources stemming from difficulty in the definition of lynching. As she states, “while most definitions seem to agree that lynchings are the result of mob action, the definitions do not always agree on how many people constitute a mob.” One source recounts, “54 lynchings between 1882 and 1927. Of these lynchings 21 had been of whites, 33 of blacks.” A second states “from 1882 to 1968...48 lynchings in the state, 20 white, 28 black.” A third, chronicling 1889 to 1919, provides “28 different lynchings.” See Walter White, Rope & Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), 235; Robert L. Zangrando, The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 5; and Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918 (NAACP, April 1919), 102. For information on specific incident, see The Ironont Democrat, January 20, 1876. Tim Konhaus argues that while incidents of lynching in the state were low numerically compared to southern states, they were high proportionally. See Tim Konhaus, “‘I Thought Things Would Be Different There’: Lynching and the Black Community in Southern West Virginia, 1880-1933,” West Virginia History, New Series, vol. 1, no. 2 (Fall 2007): 25-43.
See “Bushel of Coal for his Life,” “Mead Still Lives,” “His Trial Postponed,” “Meads will Recover,” and “Heavy Blow for a Negro,” *The Huntington Advertiser*, May 21, 1897, May 22, 1897, and May 24, 1897, and August 31, 1897.

“Will Ask for Pardon,” Ibid., June 9, 1897.
Chapter 6: Institutional Development, Public Space and Political Aspiration in Early Huntington, 1870-early 1900s.
Intelligence will never be dictated to by ignorance. Wealth will never take orders from poverty. Vice and Immorality cannot ultimately triumph over virtue—Reverend I. V. Bryant.¹

As a slave his influence was felt in the formation of the state. As a freedman he has ably met the responsibilities and duties of citizenship. He has fought to maintain his rights and privileges and he has used them to promote the State’s best interests. His efforts, moreover, have encouraged and stimulated cooperation from white citizens.²

Despite the complexities of life in Huntington, the city’s black citizens established the institutional infrastructure necessary for self-improvement and black uplift. In the process they refuted what Rayford Logan enduringly labeled “the nadir” of Afro-American existence.³ Key to this metamorphosis was increasing black movement into the “public space” and growing political agitation, all of which provided the “building blocks” of community formation.

As already noted, prior to 1872 no black churches existed in Cabell County or in Huntington. Across the river in Burlington, Ohio, Macedonia Baptist Church was, between 1811 and 1872 “the only Negro church” in the Tri-state area, and as such was singularly important to the rise of the black church in Huntington.⁴ Founded as the Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church between 1811 and 1813, the “Mother of the Black Baptist Church movement in this part of the country” served a small number of former slaves and black enclaves on both sides of the river during its formative years. As one of the oldest members of the Providence Regular Missionary Baptist Association, formerly called the Providence Anti-Slavery Missionary Baptist Association, the church increasingly served as a nexus
and conduit within a network of churches. As a consequence, a growing number of laymen and clergymen received their education and training as members of the church before moving on and starting their own churches.⁵ In 1852, a sixteen-year-old William P. Cradic was baptized at Missionary Baptist. He received his license to preach at Macedonia in 1866 and was “set apart” in 1868, when he took charge of the Second Baptist Church of Ironton, Ohio (now known as Tridestone) with a membership of 12. He served as pastor there for sixteen years during which time church membership increased to 217. By the time he retired in 1908, Cradic had served “with Providence Association for 56 years [and] attended every session with exceptions of 5.” He proudly relays, “I have occupied at times all the important positions in the gift of Providence Association which [with] honor I highly appreciate in my declining years.”⁶

After the Civil War, Macedonia continued as the focal point for all social life for its many members, some of whom “traveled 20 miles or more on foot to church service” to the top of Charley Creek Hill, removed some miles from the Ohio River.⁷ Huntington’s blacks were sometimes among them. Between 1880 and 1882,

Mrs. Callie Barnett, whose father-in-law, Rev. Nelson Barnett, was pastoring Macedonia, attended along with her husband-to-be when they were children; and they walked through the woods (now Huntington) to Kellog, West Virginia, to the Ohio River. On the bank of the river, a post stood with a bell to ring and a raft-like boat would ferry them across the river to the mouth of Buffalo Hollow. They walked from there to the top of the hill to Macedonia.⁸
Despite Macedonia’s historic centrality to the area, Cabell County’s African Americans sought opportunities to worship closer to home after Huntington’s establishment. As early as 1872 some of Huntington’s black residents agitated for their own worship site. That year, black residents petitioned the mayor to use white Pea Ridge School (located on the outskirts of Huntington) as a place of worship and to “arrange the difficulties between white and colored citizens.”

That same year, in a fund raiser for First Baptist Church, “the colored folks held a festival at [white owned] Burdick’s hall, and raised $60 for the benefit of a church which they propose to build at once if they can secure additional aid which we trust they will receive.” Naturally, there were white churches in the area where black people may have worshipped, including seven Baptist and six Methodist churches in Cabell County, containing 1400 and 2400 members, respectively, with a total property value of $16,000.

Indicative of the importance of the blending of the Ohio and Virginia/West Virginia black populations was the founding of Huntington’s first black church. The first Baptist church and the oldest black church in Huntington was originally founded as the Mt. Olive Baptist Church in 1872. Its services were initially held in the log house of Jenny Tucker where Seventh Avenue is now. Then Reverend A.D. Lewis recalled, “Because there were few Baptists and other Christians here, a union church soon grew from this beginning and moved into the frame cottage situated where the Spring Hill Cemetery now is (on the present site of the Huntington State Hospital). No denominational scruples were entertained…” A First Baptist Church anniversary program published in 1966 describes the event,
illustrating the abiding linkages between black citizens from both sides of the river:

The forefathers who organized this historic church were Reverend Nelson Barnett, Sister Betty Barnett, Brother Walker Fry[e], Brother Henry Hunt, Sister Caroline King, and Brother W.O. James. The Reverend William (Uncle Billy) Bryant of Proctorville, Ohio served as advisor and aided the eight founding members in forming our church. Kate Colly, who was eight years old at the time, was present but not included in the membership.14

As one of the original “Thirty-seven,” who had come into Burlington, Ohio, in 1849, Reverend Fry brought close connections with Macedonia Baptist and the Providence Baptist Association, which originally included West Virginia churches as members such as Booker T. Washington’s home church, the African Zion Baptist Church at Malden. In 1873, West Virginia Baptist Churches withdrew from the Providence Association and formed the Mt. Olivet Association, which evolved into the West Virginia Baptist State Convention, organized in Charleston in 1878.15

The opening of “The Ebenezer Church” on Eighth Avenue formally established the second denominational group forming the “union.”16 First referred to as Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church in 1874, and later Ebenezer United Methodist Church, Ebenezer is the oldest church building serving Huntington’s black community. Virginian Lewis Foes started the movement creating the church, culminating with the purchase of a site on the corner of Sixteenth Street and Eighth Avenue (now located between Seventeenth Street and Hal Greer.
Boulevard (formerly Sixteenth Street), and the south side of Eighth Avenue, where the first church was built. Other original trustees include William Morgan, Anderson Crafton, Robert S. B. Smith, and W. H. Saudindge. Reverend Jacob Owens was the first pastor. The first Sunday School Superintendent, and first to receive a local pastor’s license was Guyandotte resident John Shafer. Further removed from the commercial center near the river and south of the C & O tracks, this site, unlike the Spring Hill location abutted a small but growing concentration of black residents along the Sixteenth Street corridor.

The formation of both Mt. Olive Baptist Church and Ebenezer United Methodist Church demonstrated the coalescing of action and vision among peoples on both sides of the river. In May 1875 Union Sunday School began regular service, with the first and third Sundays of the month reserved for preaching by a variety of city pastors. The fundamental nature of their contributions to the growth of black institutions and the social-cultural evolution of black Huntington cannot be overstated. As suggested by A.D. Lewis’s apt statement, “No denominational scruples were entertained,” their efforts in the early 1870s lacked any articulated ideological or programmatic design beyond merely assembling black people in their own cultural spaces to worship. For the newly arrived migrant, and for those contemplating relocation, this was a reassuring development.

By the mid-1870s, Mt. Olive relocated to Twelfth Street between Second and Third Avenue, (the second of four locations in its history) marking the rise of its prominence. One newspaper report announced the opening of “The African
Church on 12th street,” describing the structure as “a neat and commodious building,” and suitable for use as a school during the winter. In the process, the transition of the congregants from tenants to land-owners and the church from Mt. Olive to First Baptist was formalized. With initiative and financial support from the black community, Mt. Olive acquired land from C.P. Huntington’s Central Land Company at 834 Eighth Avenue (on the western edge of a growing black residential population center) for $1500 and began construction of a new church in the years 1879-1880. By 1879, situated on Eighth Avenue, both First Baptist and Ebenezer United occupied sites on opposite ends of a growing black population center (see Map 4). Located south of the railroad tracks, the churches demarcated the unofficial northern, western and eastern contours of a growing black residential concentration. Only at Mt. Olive were there any women church trustees for any church during the entirety of this study. The development of the black church within Huntington afforded black men, many for the first time, the rare opportunity for status and stature.

The first group of Huntington’s early black leaders was composed of men of the cloth. Many of these men were self-taught preachers, whose efforts embodied the aspirations and articulated the hopes and concerns for a significant proportion of Huntington’s black migrant community. Upon Reverend Barnett’s death in 1909, the Huntington Dispatch wrote, “He lacked the learning of the schools because he was born a slave. But he was of a studious turn of mind, gifted in speech, could expound the scriptures with an insight truly remarkable, and his preaching was wonderfully effective in bringing men to Christ.” The funeral
service for Barnett, preached by educated black preacher Rev. I. V. Bryant, was even more expressive. “If by education we mean the drawing out of the latent powers and spreading them in glowing characters upon the canvas of the mind, if by education we mean the proper cultivation of all the faculties, the symmetrical development of the head, the heart, and the hand, together with those combined elements that make the entire man, I positively deny that he was uneducated…. he was taught by the Great God.”

Throughout his life, Bryant articulated there were two urgent needs of black people: “A well-rounded Christian education and the ownership of property. If these things could be achieved, black people could compete with white people in a predominantly white society.”

To varying degrees these men became emblematic of the broad influence later spoken of by Du Bois, Woodson, and Frazier.

Both Nelson Barnett and I.V. Bryant served as pastors at a number of churches on both sides of the river and as moderators of the Providence Regular Association annual meetings multiple occasions. For four years, from 1884 to 1888, Barnett presided over Macedonia Baptist, arguably the most prestigious black church in the area. Barnett’s pastorate at Macedonia effectively affirmed him as the area’s preeminent black pastor. One newspaper commented, “Genuine in faith he preached, and gained the sincerest respect of all citizens. White people frequently attended his services.”

Both men served as delegates, elders, founding members, and guest pastors to a number of churches throughout the Tri-state area. In 1888 Bryant began his first pastorate at First Baptist, which lasted three years before moving on to pastor Walker Memorial Baptist Church in
Washington, D.C. As late as 1893, Barnett was still affiliated with Macedonia as a church elder. Providing further evidence of the growing stature of churches and their pastors within the city, Reverend R. J. Perkins was elected President of the Colored Baptist Association held in St. Albans, West Virginia, in May 1895. Three years later, The Mt. Olivet Baptist Association, “comprising more than half of the colored Baptist churches of the state,” held their annual session in Huntington in 1898.

One important, but perhaps underappreciated, aspect of the black pastors’ influence in early post-bellum America was officiating black marriages. Denied the privilege as slaves, the religious and civil sanction of a union was a seminal, inspirational rite of passage for many black migrants and long-term residents. While many black residents choose the pastor of their church to solemnize the occasion, many black residents also sought the most influential and/or preeminent community pastor to conduct the ceremony. Between 1877 and 1880, Barnett officiated twenty-six of the forty-six black marriages in the city, constituting 57 percent of the total. Between 1882 and 1885 Barnett officiated twenty-four out of thirty-four black weddings in the city, comprising 71 percent of the total. In fact, Reverend A.D. Lewis relays, “On January 9, 1884, I marched down the aisle of the old Mt. Olive Baptist Church with Miss L. B. Davis on my arm. At the altar I was united in the bond of wedlock by Rev. Nelson Barnett. To this union was born four sons.” While certainly not the only clergy conducting ceremonies in the region, in addition to those performed in Huntington, both Barnett and Bryant presided over a number of weddings in Gallia County, Ohio, home to Gallipolis.
In fact both men served as officiates at nearly fifty weddings in the county between 1882 and 1899, including that of C. C. Barnett, Barnett’s son, over whose wedding to Gallipolis resident Katherine “Kate” A. Whiting, Bryant presided.  

The establishment of a church legitimized black individual and community aspiration in the eyes of white Huntington. Local newspapers regularly published articles on church accomplishments. Reports of Baptisms, and other church functions were more than an initiation of faith they were advertisements to a skeptical public. Thus, a newspaper article citing the baptism of “eight, five males and three females,” not only reassured a like-minded black population but also served as a recruiting tool. “The ceremony was performed by Rev. Mr. Fry [organizer of Mt. Olive Baptist and then pastor of Macedonia Church] from Ohio, who has been preaching for sometime to the colored church at this place, which has enjoyed quite an extensive revival.”

Black church activities also provided opportunities to educate whites, an important byproduct. At least one prominent white preacher and city leader of the era sought out opportunities to meet black preachers, parishioners, and laborers of the area. Shortly after his appointment to Fifth Avenue Baptist Church in 1877, white Reverend W.P. Walker traveled to Ohio to attend the three-day annual meeting of the Providence Association and donated ten dollars upon his departure. The following Sunday he “Heard Bro. Williams (colored) preach in our hall last night,” a reference to the white Lallance Hall. Two years later Walker attended another Association meeting for two days, and preached at the Rome
Methodist Episcopal Church that evening. In effect, Walker recognized the importance of linkages with the Association and its black members. His attendance seems to have borne fruit! His program from Mt. Olive Baptist, included the notation, “Was elected Moderator!” clearly showing his excitement upon garnering the recognition. Whether motivated by a belief that his ministry could help address (and mitigate) the “Negro problem,” or reflecting the Christian imperative of outreach to the broader community, Walker also made regular visits to the C &O Shops throughout his twenty-five year tenure at Fifth Avenue Baptist. Walker maintained religious ties to Huntington’s black churches and black community throughout the 1880s, serving as a visiting pastor for regular Sunday service in unnamed black churches and at least on one occasion welcoming a visiting black pastor into his own.

Churches were instrumental in helping to maintain a particular social decorum. Macedonia’s church minutes reveal member admonishment and reprimand for a number of social indiscretions, immoral acts, and perceived grievances committed within the broader community, including swearing, betting, slander, theft, and adultery. Church arbitration attempted to circumscribe and guide black behavior. In the late-1870s and early-1880s, emblematic of the church doctrine in the era, both the largest white church in the city, Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, and black Macedonia Baptist passed resolutions banning its members from engaging in certain social activities, primary among them dancing. So pronounced was the issue during the era Reverend I. V. Bryant published a book entitled, “Is Dancing a Sin?” The importance of these mechanisms in bettering,
stabilizing, and fortifying the race and the community should not be overlooked. Within Huntington, black migrants and residents encountered a new cultural landscape and worldviews. In a racially discriminatory setting, most of Huntington’s black inhabitants seemed to know the limits of societal sanction and observed them. Still, black institutions, led by the church in Huntington, calibrated the social behavior of its members in this new cultural environment.47

Perhaps, the most contentious issue of the era was the question of integration of schools. West Virginia, as a political entity, might not have been “southern,” but it was (and is) the only southern state completely within Appalachia. And it was not immune to the ongoing, often fractious debate over the question of desegregation. So contentious was the issue for Huntington’s whites that ten percent of the articles in Huntington newspapers between 1872 and 1874 were written about school integration.48

With the State’s founding in 1863, no provision was made in the constitution for the education of Negro children. Further, in 1864, William R. White, the first Superintendent of State Public Schools, wrote that the Black freedmen were being denied access to education. “As the law stands,” he writes, “I fear they will be compelled to remain in ignorance.”49 In 1866, strong opposition erupted in the Senate over using tax money to fund Negro schools in counties having few Negroes. So entrenched was debate over funding, appropriation and enumeration, that little progress was made on the subject of black schools, and for four years no mention of “colored” schools was made by White’s successors.50 The provision was eventually passed in 1872 ensuring that a
Negro school should be established whenever there were twenty or more children, and to teach those between six and twenty-one years old. In those districts having fewer than twenty, a pro-rated appropriation was set, based on the number of black and white pupils. Thus, West Virginia was the first state in the Union to establish a separate system of public schools for African Americans in the South. In truth, the progression of the Black school system in the northern, eastern and central regions of West Virginia was accomplished through the state’s assistance and the efforts of black and white teachers. In Huntington, evidence indicates the primacy of black-led education initiatives in the region.

The county’s first Negro schools were in Guyandotte and Barboursville, and were the result of the efforts of black laborers (including Virginia migrants James Woodson, Nelson Barnett, and W. O. James) employed on the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad. Then seventeen-year-old Ohio born and resident Reverend I.V. Bryant in 1873 was the first teacher of the Guyandotte school. At one time said to be “the greatest educator in the three-state area,” Bryant was emblematic of a number of early black settlers, who were born and/or lived just across the Ohio River yet were integral to the formation of Huntington’s early black community. The first school established near Huntington was opened in the log house on Cemetery Hill, just east of the town and a little west of Guyandotte. So small was the Negro school enumeration that the two towns had to cooperate in maintaining it. In October of that same year, in a building “donated” by Robert Long, Huntington’s first Negro “school” was approved by the city council. It was situated in a “very neat building finished, on 12th street (sic) [and Sixth Avenue],
which can be used for a house of worship, or education as the occasion may require.” Dedicated on September 14, 1873, the building was also used for church services and at times referenced as the Union Chapel and/or the African Church in Huntington newspapers.

William O. James became the school’s first teacher at $30 per month. In October of 1874, James petitioned the city council to “teach [in] the [public] colored school” and was officially appointed teacher, garnering a raise to $35 per month, in line with white teachers in the state, a unique circumstance in the South. Over the course of the next ten years the school moved several times, closed because of a lack of funds for five months from April to September 1875, and, with the departure of James, experienced a delay in reopening because no qualified teacher could be found. The school eventually settled in the Holderby Grove (Landing) area, located “on the edge of a three-acre grove of beech trees” at the end of Fifteenth Street near present day Seventh Avenue. In the initial stages of community formation the school’s many moves probably impacted black attendance. Moreover, for those black residents who wished to attend school not between the ages of six and twenty-one years an advance payment of four dollars per term was required. Still, it remained the lone option for the county’s black population, young and old. In 1874, 43 students were enrolled in the school, with an average daily attendance of thirty-five. Their attendance rates exceeded white attendance rates 81 percent to 76 percent. In 1876, George Wilson’s fourth son, Theodore Wilson, secured his teacher’s certificate, and entered the teaching profession at the age of nineteen, acquiring a job in
Huntington. Then located at the corner of Third Avenue and Twelfth Street, the school was within four city blocks of his birthplace. In August 1880 Wilson, W.S. Peters, Samuel Eubanks, and W.T. Smith vied for the nomination to teach in the colored school, with Wilson winning out for the three month term. However, after the county’s decision to employ no teachers with a Number 4 certificate, James Liggins succeeded William James in 1880.

William F. James and his wife, Susie, also had their origins in Ohio. In 1882, both became the full-time teachers in Huntington, posts Mr. James held for a truncated five years, dying in 1887, followed some years later by Mrs. James. A former teacher in Cheshire Colored School, a one-room Gallia County, Ohio, school house, James had traveled to work in Huntington sometime after 1877. As Carter G. Woodson notes, the two were, “…products of the Ohio school system. They were for their time well-prepared teachers of foresight, who had the ability to arouse interest and inspire the people. He was an earnest worker, willing to sacrifice everything for the good of the cause. His wife continued for a number of years thereafter to render the system the same efficient service…” Recalling James’ death, then Douglass High School Principal J.W. Scott states, “…after a brief illness he passed to ‘pathetic dust’, bemoaned by the entire community and especially by his pupils, many of whom accompanied the body to its last resting place in Gallipolis, Ohio. Several of his pupils afterward graduated from other schools; but they remember him as the chief inspiration in their lives.”

In 1875 black school enrollment figures fell, probably as a result of economic downturn attendant to the Depression of 1873. While average daily
attendance in November of that year increased to 85 percent, school enrollment dropped from the initial 43 students to 28. In the year-end report issued on December 30th, there were thirty students enrolled—19 males and 11 females; average daily attendance was 23—16 for males and 7 for females, and daily attendance had dropped 9% to 72 percent—84 percent of the males but only 60 percent of the women.73

In 1880, only thirty-eight black students, out of 143 school age children attended school, representing a gain of only eight students from the 1875 December 30th school report. That year, in contrast to the greater number of male students in those figures (and the greater number of males in the general population), female students exceeded males twenty-one to seventeen. The change in male/female figures correlates with a shift in the types of female students attending school. Whereas the 1875 figures reveal a statistically large number of employed female students, the 1880 census shows none. The twin effects of the Depression of 1873 and Huntington’s narrowly focused economy may have reduced the opportunities for women to work and attend school. Instead, “at home” daughters are the primary attendees.74

In 1885 conflicting data complicates examination of black Huntington’s education metamorphosis. Enrollment figures increased from October to December, yet average daily attendance decreased during the period. By October black school enrollment was 118 pupils (lower than 1880 totals but significantly higher than the December 30th 1875 enrollment of 30) with an average daily attendance of ninety-five. Attendance rates, while the third lowest of the city’s
four schools, was still an impressive 91.5%, just below the city average of 93.4%. Figures for November 1885 show 123 black students enrolled, an increase over October, yet average daily attendance dropped to 90. Further, the percentage of average daily attendance dropped to 88%, a rate below the city’s 92.25%. December totals show 128 black students enrolled, but no average daily attendance numbers given for the month due to a measles outbreak throughout the city. Perhaps, as a consequence, the percentage of average daily attendance dropped to 86%, the lowest in the city save for rural Hill School at 79%.

School attendance was a statewide problem that city leaders acknowledged. While conceding that onset of colder weather, the holiday season, and a measles outbreak impacted attendance for all city students, one editorial expressed exasperation at the dwindling attendance numbers during the latter part of the year:

Observation shows that a small part of it (sic), possibly one-fifth, probably less, is to be attributed to sickness and other unavoidable causes, and the remainder (sic) to be referred to these general influences most appropriately summed up by the word neglect.

The fickle-minded, infirm-of-purpose or child contributes a larger share than necessity; the careless parent and indifferent child—indifferent because of parental carelessness—furnish a full quota for the service of the sidewalks and street-corners; the indolent and indifferent complete the list of irregular pupils that burden the fall and retard the schools. Usually the hegira begins with the Holidays, for the momentum of school reviews and school pleasures carries them to that time; but there is no good reason why it should be necessary to record a gradually diminishing number from that time.
There is no way to know whether, and to what extent, black students attended the sidewalks or street-corners instead of the classroom, though it is not difficult to imagine that some did. What is clear is that the dwindling attendance trend escalated as winter worsened. While black enrollment increased to 133 students in January, average daily attendance dropped to 68 students as a consequence of “extreme cold for one week” and the continuing measles outbreak. But one other development offers some insight into the seemingly paradoxical relationship between growing enrollment figures yet decreasing attendance rates. In October 1885, William F. James, “Principal of the colored school,” garnered permission from the city council to establish the city’s first night school for blacks, providing heretofore unavailable options for both black male and female day workers.

Still, Huntington black individuals and families availed themselves to educational opportunities available in the city. By 1880, Nelson and Betty Barnett were the parents of four children, all in school, including their daughter Josephine Maria (known as Josie or Jo), born in 1872. Three of the four school-age daughters, Mary A., Maggie, and Lizzie, aged twelve, nine, and six, of the household of farm worker Robert Holley and his housekeeper wife, Caroline, attended school. Minerva, the oldest daughter at sixteen, took care of household domestic chores. In the household of long time Cabell County resident, laborer Thomas Wilson and his housekeeper wife, Jennie (Virginia, in the 1870 census), were sufficiently economically stable to be able to send three (the two oldest daughters and the eldest son) of five school-age children, a notable achievement.
given the household comprised seven children total. Both school age daughters, aged fourteen and twelve, attended school, while the two middle sons aged nine and seven, did not.  

Arguably, the most important development of the 1890s was the establishment of the first black high school in Huntington in 1891. Led by a multi-generational group of local African Americans agitating for change, the Board of Education in response erected a building at the corner of Eighth Avenue and Sixteenth Street. For the vast majority of the state’s black population, the city provided the only opportunity to acquire a high school education, in part, because no compulsory school attendance law existed in West Virginia until 1897.  

In 1911 Principal Scott commented on the achievement, “The little one room schoolhouse changed to a commodious six-room brick with a high school department.” The six room brick edifice with a basement cost $15,000, housed grades one through twelve, and was named for ex-slave, abolitionist, and nineteenth-century black intellectual Frederick Douglass. The faculty, consisting of only a handful of teachers (including Josie Barnett), and “only one instructor for the upper grades,” taught a high school curriculum then only two years in length. Principal William T. McKinney, originally from Malden, WV, the hometown of Booker T. Washington, presided until 1897, when he retired.  

The first graduating class of Douglass High School in 1893 consisted of three students: Mathew Colley, Belle Turner, and Boston Scott. Ten students, including four females, comprised the graduating class of 1895. Before leaving to acquire a teaching certificate at Berea College in eastern Kentucky, future
eminent historian Carter G. Woodson, “the first black American of slave parentage to earn a Ph.D. in history,” and Trent R. Jenkins, graduated in 1896. Already having acquired the fundamentals of education from his two uncles, John and James Riddle, who ran a local school in Buckingham County, Virginia, Woodson accompanied his parents in 1893 from the county at the age of 17 to Huntington, following the same pathways his father, James Henry Woodson, had traversed, along with the Barnetts, some twenty years earlier. In 1900, after obtaining his teaching certificate at Berea College in Kentucky, Carter Woodson returned to Huntington, serving as teacher and principal of Douglass. Under his supervision at Douglass a library was started, and three classes graduated while he was principal. In 1903, he resigned to attend the University of Chicago, where he received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Woodson attained his Ph.D. in 1912, the second black to earn the distinction from Harvard (W.E.B. Du Bois was the first).

While arguably the most illustrious graduate of Douglass High during the late-nineteenth century, Woodson was merely one of many. Two more classes graduated in 1897. That year another Douglass graduate Carter H. Barnett, returned to Huntington after marriage, and employment as a teacher and principal in Keyser, West Virginia. Reverend Barnett’s eldest son, having graduated from Denison University in 1892, “the first black person from Huntington to graduate college,” succeeded McKinney as principal of Douglass. Under Barnett’s tutelage the curriculum was lengthened to four years and new courses implemented. Notably, Barnett arrived at the same time his sister, Josephine, was a teacher of
the primary grades. Though not a graduate of Douglass, their brother, Constantine Clinton (formerly General McClinton), after graduating from the School of Medicine at Howard University, the first black person from Huntington to complete medical school, established Barnett Hospital on 7th Avenue in the early 1900s, the first hospital for African Americans in the city.87

Graduates of Douglass and others were representatives of a nascent black professional class within the city during the 1890s, a significant milestone. J. W. Scott notes, “It was during this period that the professional negro appeared. It was during this period that the community witnessed its first class of graduates from the local schools and the home coming of young graduates from other schools. Better qualified leaders made their appearance.”88 In 1895, W. H. Gordon became the first African American admitted to the bar in Cabell County.89 That same year, Josie Barnett graduated from Douglass. Although the educational progress of blacks in Huntington proceeded on a segregated and unequal basis, it still represented a vital expression of black collective agency.90 At their 1901 commencement ceremony, held at the white owned Davis Theatre, contrary to prevailing Jim Crow era practice, “the parquet, boxes and dress circle were occupied by colored people, the balcony by white folks.”91

The evolution of social circumstance for Huntington’s black inhabitants proceeded in concert with the city’s increasing importance as a regional cultural, social, commercial, and government hub, and increasing black entry into the public space. The location of Douglass, a distance from the riverfront area of Holderby Grove, historic home to black railroad and common laborers confirmed
the de facto shift in black spatial community orientation that arguably began with the establishment of Huntington’s first black churches twenty years earlier. By the 1890s Huntington was a regional hub offering attractions, shopping, and adventure for an increasingly diverse and affluent native population as well as for large groups of visitors. Foremost among these visitors were African Americans, who arrived, sometimes by the hundreds, to enjoy the city. They, and others, could take advantage of a host of bars and illicit venues, go to the theatre, and visit family and friends in the predominantly working class African American residential enclaves, including Buffington Row, Central City, in the West End, and the “East End,” where they might get a haircut at the barber shop of John Thomas and Reverend A.F. Tuck (pastor of Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal) near Third Avenue and Nineteenth Street.

Black visitors and residents also reveled in the competition and fun of cake walks. Popular during the nineteenth century, these contests involved contestants executing elaborate or amusing walking steps in the quest to acquire the prize of a cake. Importantly, these contests were emblematic of examples of African Americans asserting their rights to use and enjoy more of Huntington’s public space. During the 1890s newspapers report Huntington’s black inhabitants increasingly claiming civic space for public rituals. One event, held July 4th, 1898, attracted 5,000 people, a “crowd so great,” a newspaper reported, “that the management after two hours struggling with the throng deemed it best to adjourn matters to the Davis Theatre…” Another scheduled “Grand Cake Walk,” involved black citizens from several local cities up and down the Ohio River.
The entrance of Huntington’s black citizens into public spaces historically claimed by whites is no small matter; that this phenomenon brought together people from several communities magnifies its importance. 97

The dispersed and rural nature of West Virginia’s black population and the dearth of organized recreational and social outlets within the coalfields also contributed to black influx into cities, and the rise of Huntington’s black working class. 98 Historian Joseph W. Moss’s 1936 study of the recreational facilities available to blacks within the southern West Virginia coal-mining counties of Mercer, McDowell, and Mingo, an area, comprising nine incorporated cities and towns, and forty small towns clustered around coal mines or coal camps, reports a black population of 33,000. Moss comments that there were,

… only two playgrounds, only one public library, only three pool rooms that even attempt any standard of decency. Not a single coal operation supports anything approaching a recreational hall.... We find only one Y.M.C.A. which is not a Y.M.C.A. but a rooming house for the Norfolk and Western [railroad] employees, [and] not a single church or organization fosters a Camp Fire Girls or Girl Scout Troop for Negro girls. 99

In contrast, Huntington offered a variety of recreational and social outlets for the area blacks, most revolving around church, school, and lodge. In addition to the regular visitors offered by the C & O and N & W, large numbers of shoppers and businessmen arrived into the city daily from Lincoln, Logan and Boone counties over the Guyan Valley Division rail line. 100 Thus, visitors could avail themselves of varied options for entertainment and fellowship. People
recalled some of the events with fondness. Walter Myers recalled: “When I was a
kid, they had a pavilion out here on the [Hal Greer] boulevard and they had fine
dances out there, late in the evening.”

Denied participation on the C. & O. baseball team, black residents organized their own. In late-May 1902, a baseball game played between Ashland and Huntington was the first ever between two black teams held in the city. Blacks could travel along the Camden Interstate Railway (the street car system) to Clyffside Park, located in the city’s west end, before connecting on to Catlettsburg and Ashland, Kentucky, and lastly, Ironton, Ohio. The system reportedly brought more than “a thousand people every day of the year” to Huntington, and attracted black people from throughout the region. In July 1902, attendees from a regional convention of the Colored Knights of Pythians filled “three solid cars,” on the line. Also at the convention was the ladies court, an auxiliary of the body. In September of the same year, the Charleston branch of the Colored Knights, accompanied by its fifteen-piece band arrived into the city as participants in the celebration of Emancipation Day. A large number of visitors and transient workers rented rooms in private homes or stayed with friends.

The development of parks as an “idealized space” for the area’s black populace allowed black residents to reconnect to nature, but it also provided distance and a reprieve from whites, a development many of the city’s African Americans surely welcomed. In 1909, African-Americans from Huntington, Ironton, Ashland, and Catlettsburg hosted an Emancipation Day celebration at Clyffeside in which upwards of 5,000 attended. In September 1911, Belleview
Park opened. Noting the importance of the park’s Labor Day opening, one black female resident noted, “No more begging and borrowing. No more special days. Open to us every day. There was roller skating, moving pictures and all sorts of amusements, also a big barbecue lasting all day. The park was crowded with visitors from neighboring towns as well as home folks.”

In 1913, Ritter Park, the city’s largest park, opened, but black residents were restricted to a small portion of the east end of the park. Although segregated, Walter Myers indicates that the mandate was not always observed by local blacks, “They wanted to segregate the park, like the blacks play on the East end of the park and all the rest of the park for [whites]. [We] played basketball… and stuff like that, running and fishing. There was a lagoon out in there, kids would fish and swim in it.”

In response to the exclusion of the State’s black homeless or neglected children from the funded orphanage in Elkins and concerned over his sister’s plight, who was left to raise her children alone after the death of her husband in a coal mine, Bluefield resident Reverend Charles E. McGhee set out to aid homeless black children. In early 1899, he incorporated an orphan’s home for black children. After moving to west Huntington, to what was then Central City, McGhee opened his home on twenty acres of farm land on March 5, 1900 with eighteen residents, installing a curriculum based on the Tuskegee model. Ignored and unsupported by the State in violation of federal law, McGhee was forced to solicit funds from the general public for upkeep. Despite his best efforts, which included local white philanthropy, fund raisers, and a traveling band comprised of male and female residents, the option on the land expired prior to its purchase,
and McGhee moved the home to Blue Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, and then to a site 5 miles east of the city, near Guyandotte.\textsuperscript{110}

In 1900, the Home, headed by white Byron A. Walcott, with Maggie A. W. Thompson as matron, and Nannie V. Marrie as servant, housed seven children. The children’s ages ranged from 1 to 10, and included Thelmer Marrie, 1, Cornellius Marrie, 5, Helen Marrie, 6, Edith A. Thompson, 7, Willie Chapmen, 8, Julian Massie, 9, and Hester A. Chapman, 10. In 1903, the state allocated $1,500 toward the expenses of the home, and in 1910, assumed full responsibility of the facility, purchasing the building and grounds for $10,000. Children in the home were separated by gender, with a matron in charge of the girls, and a superintendent in charge of the boys. In 1911, the home housed 64 orphans, 42 boys and 22 girls, a number that increased the following year to 72, 45 boys and 27 girls.\textsuperscript{111} Children learned basic skills which varied according to gender. Girls were taught general housework, cooking, laundry work, and dressmaking. Boys were taught in agriculture, carpentry, masonry, shoemaking, blacksmithing, plumbing, and painting. Both sexes learned a common curriculum of reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, geography, history, physiology, and grammar.\textsuperscript{112} McGhee remained superintendent until 1915, when he was succeeded by James L. Hill. In 1920 the original building burned, with the children placed in private homes until a new building could be constructed. Although no longer used as the Orphan’s home, the replacement building lies on Route 60 east of Huntington.\textsuperscript{113}

Mirroring the national growth of fraternal orders and mutual aid organizations in the late-nineteenth century, the Huntington possessed chapters of
the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows and the Household of Ruth as early as 1891. Denied entrance into white-only chapters, local blacks utilized avenues of cultural self-expression as well as venue for civic, economic, and political aspiration. Huntington newspaper articles chronicle the proliferation of these lodges, clubs, and benevolent organizations, citing the positive affects of their formation. *The Huntington Herald* remarked, “The colored people have lodges and organizations of a secret or social nature, which do much good. These are the lodges of Masons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, the order (sic) of St. Luke, etc…”

Black fraternal organizations in late-nineteenth century Huntington participated in the cultural metamorphosis of Huntington’s black institutions. Black people seeking fraternity amongst like-minded contemporaries, usually of similar social, racial, and/or occupational/class standings, sought insular societies in which they gained autonomy, authority, and community. Throughout the 1890s and early 1900s, the indigenous creation, expansion, and increasing influence of these institutions in Huntington helped “to reinforce the communal and spiritual aspects of their culture.” Furthermore, these fraternal and benevolent organizations linked black leaders from across the region and state.

Formed in 1892 as the West Virginia Grand Lodge of the Knights of Pythias by Charlestonian Samuel W. Starks, the Knights was one of the leading secret black fraternal orders of the day and included representatives from lodges at Raymond City, Huntington, Charleston, and Montgomery. Ancella Bickley notes of the organization, “It and other secret orders enhanced the sense of community
and national connection among blacks, providing them with opportunities to share in business, social, and civil activities under the lodge's aegis." By 1904, the Huntington Knights of Pythias Hall was hosting meetings of the Douglass Republican League, “composed of the leading colored voters of the city,” occasionally, with the accompaniment of Douglass orchestra, composed of a number of young men of the League. In 1908, the Grand Lodge held its annual meeting in Huntington, with a number of business sessions held at First Baptist Church. A parade and picnic held at Clyffeside Park in Ashland, Kentucky, concluded the three-day event. The Knights also provided financial support to its members. In 1909 the Huntington chapter of the Lodge contributed $2800 in payments to orphans and widows of deceased members of the organization. In November of that year, local actors participated in a performance of the drama “Thirty Years of Freedom” at the Knights of Pythias Hall, with one-third of the proceeds going to the Colored Orphans Home, and the remainder to the Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church.

While white Huntingtonians approved of black progress within the socio-cultural and educational arenas, efforts by local blacks to acquire greater political clout met with resistance throughout the late-nineteenth century. Early in the town’s development, black residents were aware of the importance of the Convention of 1872 on black aspiration. Initiated in the aftermath of a Democratic-Conservative victory in 1870, the Convention called for a referendum on a new constitution to reverse the political gains and excessive punishment of the Rebels achieved under the “Yankee” convention of 1863. Among the political
measures challenged were black enfranchisement and the right for blacks to seek public office. African American entrepreneur and leader of some standing in greater Huntington, Robert Long urged city blacks to vote against the measure. In mid August of 1872 a Huntington newspaper, *The Daily Press*, published his exhortations for blacks to protect their political rights:

Now let every colored man in Cabell County rally to the polls next Thursday, come early, and vote for those who are now trying to make political capital by exciting prejudice against our color. Over one hundred of our race are in Huntington, we obey the laws and pay our taxes as well as whites, and we have the kindest feeling for our old masters in the south, but we cannot vote with them and will not help to elevate them into power as long as they indulge in unkind remarks against us or the glorious Yankees who shed their blood so freely for our freedom. Let every colored man rally and vote down the new Constitution and support Gov. Jacob, as Governor of all people.

Long operated a barbershop, restaurant, a billiard parlor, and owned several other properties, including the building he contributed to the city for the first African American school. “A colored man, not a member of any denomination,” Long also advertised his services as a doctor, and was henceforth referred to as Doctor Long. Evidence indicates that his influence within Huntington was substantial but short-lived, with much about his life hidden from public record. Long’s visibility, eloquence, and affluence garnered local interest in several newspaper articles between 1872 and 1874, including unwanted attention from time to time. Whether personal or politically motivated, in 1874 Long and Charles Ford, were charged with “engaging in a fight and disturbing the peace, by
using boisterous language” in front of a downtown hotel, and each fined $1.00 and costs.\textsuperscript{128}

Long’s exhortations plainly centered on his call for white Huntingtonians to recognize him and “over one hundred of our race,” as Americans and to grant them the rights guaranteed in the U. S. Constitution. His call to action reveals recognition of his allegiance and obligations to the town’s black population. To him voting was a moral cause of the highest order. Moreover, his call presupposes the existence of residents not only similarly outraged and politically aware, but also possessed of the means and will to disseminate and act on his directives. Speaking on black Huntington of 1872 Long demonstrates that, for him, group articulation and racial cohesion was an explicit goal even though the inhabitants lacked many formal venues for cultural expression and political activism. His respectful tone and pointed words surely found a willing audience, black and white, linked by common interests.\textsuperscript{129}

Because Huntington blacks possessed a high degree of interest in local and statewide political affairs, both political parties sought to exploit it. In early 1874, providing evidence of an ongoing network of social linkages within black Huntington, 50 blacks met “at their Chapel” to consider candidates in upcoming municipal elections. One month later, local Democrats, seeking the support of “the colored citizens of Huntington,” reprimanded Dr. Long and the Radical Republicans in the local press. Later that year, the interestingly named Richard America, “the colored Demonsthenes of Hinton,” traveled to Huntington on the behalf of the Democratic Party to urge black voters to refrain from going to the
polls in the October election. While belittling America and his overtures, the local Republican newspaper noted, “Dr. Long has more sense and ability than Richard, and he makes better sense of what he has, too.”

Despite the efforts of Long and other local blacks throughout the 1870s and 1880s, black residents made no political inroads. Even in the 1890s, Huntington’s black leaders failed to rally sufficient voter support to acquire any office beyond low-level municipal positions. Yet, some were able to utilize their modicum of political clout to acquire status and stature. Noteworthy was William O. James, who received accolades from “The Advertiser” for “the efficiency and promptitude” with which he discharged his duties as Assistant Street Commissioner. Chas. A Wilson remarks, that along with Moses Butler, “a leader of the colored class,” James was “looked upon by the race as the man who could get plums from the politicians.” James assisted some black residents to acquire jobs including postal carriers Ike Miller and George Hughes, and post office janitor Jenkins Gillard. James’s elaborate twenty-fifth wedding anniversary celebration perhaps suggests his success.

There were, however, other notable black secular voices: migrant turned entrepreneur Dan Hill mounted regular verbal attacks against the tactics of the Republican Party to disenfranchise black candidates. Other black leaders also expressed their frustration with the historical apathy exhibited by the Republican Party. “The colored brother is very much in evidence this time,” one local paper noted in early 1898, “and is beginning to manifest an independent spirit toward ‘the gang,’ that is so characteristic of that race just before election.” Shortly
afterwards, Negro Republicans met to denounce the agenda of the local ticket as well as the national party, specifically “condemning Secretary Alger for his incompetency in the management of the Spanish-American war.” One year later, in an explicit rebuff to the ongoing state of political affairs at the local level, African Americans established an independent Republican slate in the quest for municipal offices. Led by Moses Butler, and comprising barbers Isaac Miller and Charles Seals, as well as a group of unskilled laborers from across the city, the ticket, seeking to fill the positions of mayor, clerk, treasurer, assessor, and two council seats each for the first, second, and third wards, respectively, mounted an impressive challenge; even more so when, one month later, twelve black candidates ran for seats in the various wards of the city.

The formation of the “Colored Independent Republican Ticket” signaled a heightened level of activism by black working-class leaders in their quest to acquire municipal offices. It generated “a vast amount of heated discussion…among republican leaders on the subject of Moses and the colored voter generally,” and seems to have forced the local party to respond. One local newspaper, noting the arrival of former McDowell County Republican legislator and now pastor Christopher Payne into Huntington relayed, “He may be here for gospel purposes but the gospel is only an incident. He will labor faithfully to prevent Moses Butler’s ticket from getting any votes.” Interestingly, while no reason can be ascertained as to why, later that month Butler exhibited doubts over his actions and sued to have his name removed from the Independent Republican ticket. His indecision created backlash from white Republicans, and seems to
have contributed to fracturing of the black vote. In 1900, the city possessed 362 black males of voting age out of a total voting population of 3385. Perhaps illuminating the way class and race hindered working-class political aspirations, their efforts failed to garner sufficient support to win one seat, with four of the candidates failing to receive even one vote. Thus, as Huntington’s black residents entered the twentieth century, their political aspirations remained unmet and at the behest of white benevolence. To what extent this failure contributed to and fueled ongoing hostilities within the black community and between black aspirants is unknown. However, a local newspaper article recounting a public altercation between W. O. James and Butler suggests an explanation.

Locked out of the political arena Afro-Huntingtonians created to use other mechanisms to achieve their aspirations. In the spring of 1900, Huntington’s first black newspaper, The West Virginia Spokesman, was founded and edited by C. H. Barnett, then principal of Douglass High School, and son of Reverend Barnett, and brother of Dr. C.C. Barnett. J.W. Scott, then vice principal of the school, served as editor. The paper’s “political” purpose, “to promote the cause of the colored people politically by urging them to divide their vote among the two leading parties,” advocated political independence as an avenue to address continuing marginalization by the State’s political parties. The Huntington Advertiser, which regularly covered news of the black community, proclaimed the Spokesman “a creditable newspaper.”

The involvement of two of the town’s most prominent black educators and the overt political stance of the paper compelled the local board of education to
respond to the threat to the status quo. “Over the recommendation of the teachers’ committee,” the board fired Barnett and Scott and agreed to reinstate both men only after they agreed to quit politics and cease editing the paper.146 Barnett issued a vigorous response which ultimately led to his permanent dismissal. Responding to the charge that his paper was an arm of the Democratic Party (and perhaps distancing himself from Afro-Huntingtonians seeking or engaging in political bargaining), Barnett stated in an editorial in the paper: “No, I have never had a political pull, a religious pull, or a society pull to help me in securing or retaining a public school position and when the time comes that any of these are necessary, I am out of the business.”147

There is some evidence that Barnett was indeed a Democrat. Barnett’s grandson, Nelson Barnett Jr., believes that an anonymous letter to a local newspaper dated February 8, 1898, and signed, “Negro with a Thinking Apparatus,” was written by C. H. Barnett. In it, the writer speaks for “myself and 999 other negroes in West Virginia who are tired of being dupes and cat’s paws for the republican party.” “In short,” the writer continued, “the sooner the negro divorces himself from the republican party the better for him… If janitorships and third class clerks, porters, etc. is the kind of recognition we want, I assert that for 35 years service the democratic party would in my opinion have given the negro 16 to 1.”148 If the grandson’s contention is true, Barnett’s affiliation with the Democratic party did not last. In 1908 Barnett served as chairman of the aforementioned four-year-old Douglass Republican League.149
Inarguably, the development of a professional class was crucial to black Huntington’s development, however, it is important to recognize that not all professionals were leaders, and not all leaders were professionals. Certainly, Huntington’s earliest black leaders were men of the cloth, members of the working class without explicit church affiliation or record of their contribution, were also important. Given the inchoate nature of early black Huntington and the dearth of available primary source material, location and definition of black leaders is problematic. Yet, some discussion of the defining characteristics of black leadership must be attempted if we are to gain greater access into the nature of community and those deemed best suited to lead.

First and foremost, while they might have been advantaged educationally or financially, black leaders lived among and interacted with black Huntingtonians, and frequently, Ohio Valley African Americans. Thus they were not an isolated elite. In this capacity, they knew the concerns of the other members of their community and set out to address them. Given that the African American population nearly tripled from 1880 to 1890, the absence of the 1890 federal manuscript census and extant city directory’s prior to 1891/2 is regrettable. Thus, establishing firm longevity parameters (ten-year versus fifteen-year residency, for instance) is nearly impossible. It is possible, however, that the details would create an artificial barometer by which to judge an individual’s contribution. Certainly, evidence of tenure is important, yet establishing a fixed time span is problematic as well. Given the fluid and embryonic state of Huntington’s industry, infrastructure, and society, as well as the migratory patterns tied to the
The precariousness of black working class formation, such a standard may place too great a burden of proof upon those whose contributions, while noteworthy, were short-lived. For instance, Robert Long’s short stay in the city does not reduce his contribution. Further, surely many migrants followed the pattern of James Woodson and traveled back and forth to Virginia.

Lastly, logic dictates the inclusion of those who assisted the formation or maintenance of, an early black institution, headed a group, or were selected for an organizational position or office. Admittedly, this definition is problematic as well, primarily because it elevates those holding middle-class status (for which available source material exists), and diminishes the role of those within the working class (as well as women) who sought to fight injustice and inequality in their own ways. Again, Robert Long is absent from the membership rolls of varied organizations or groups. Ultimately, to gain a better measure of black leadership within Huntington’s formative years, we need to stretch the definition of leadership beyond the recognized networks and borders of spatial proximity, fixed tenure parameters, and formal membership, to include those who imprinted and impacted aspects of the black community, whose progressive aspirations embraced and attempted to lift others within it, and whose efforts were recognized and respected by members of it.

The first generation of black southern migrants had not let the scars of slavery incapacitate them nor the rise of Negrophobia impede them. Transitioning from slavery to stability, significant numbers of Huntington’s black migrants and residents had passed through what Elizabeth Clark-Lewis described as
“opportunity screens,” based upon firm religious beliefs, strong kin or augmented family support networks, and education. Critical to this metamorphosis was the history of place and circumstance linking and binding black people on both sides of the Ohio River. Through the efforts and visions of both long-term antebellum settlers and post-bellum migrants, the socio-cultural foundation necessary to continued progression in the twentieth century was laid. In effect, each assisted Huntington’s black residents carve out a place to call their own.

Like black people across the nation, Huntington’s black residents seized upon opportunity as best as they could to better their lives by establishing necessary institutions. Importantly, this metamorphosis began with the efforts of Huntington’s black working-class. Within this class, a cadre of indigenous black community leaders assisted, and in some instances, initiated the construction and maintenance of churches, a school, and the conduits for political action. The development of black institutions provided the foundation for a people to acquire an education, “to rise,” and to broaden their horizons. By the time a contingent of black professionals appeared in the mid-1890s, the necessary “building blocks” were firmly in place, and recognized by African Americans throughout the region as the bedrock of individual aspiration, social advancement, and community formation.

Encompassing the political and social strivings of a people, the rise of these institutions coincided with African Americans increasing political self-activity and entry into the public space as an attempt to carve out their own spaces and create their own “moral geography.” This dynamic was not simplistic, linear, or
unified; it was ensconced within and the result of contradictory and complementary forces, aspirations, and mentalities. Throughout Huntington’s formative years, black migrants’ pragmatic adaptations to their circumstance illustrated their non-consent to their subjugation, denigration, and oppression. At the dawn of a new century, the utilization of these characteristics would be further needed as the city’s commercial, manufacturing, and cultural expansion continued and Jim Crow strengthened.


4 “The First Baptist Church of Burlington, 1983;” 150th Anniversary Souvenir Book of Providence Regular Missionary Baptist Association, April 15-19, 1984, Gallia County (Ohio) Historical & Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, OH.

5 There is some evidence that Nelson Barnett received his training, and perhaps his first job at Macedonia. In contrast, there is no doubt that he was linked to the church and its members during his life in Huntington.


8 “Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church,” 150th Anniversary Souvenir Book of Providence Regular Missionary Baptist Association, April 15-19, 1984, Gallia County Historical & Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, OH.

Reverend Nelson Barnett’s great grandson, Nelson L. Barnett Jr., disputes this version of events, saying among other things, “The foregoing information was surprising, inasmuch as Mrs. Callie Barnett was but 10 or 12 years old in years cited, and her husband-to-be, Carter Harrison Barnett, was four years older than she. Considered that Caroline (Callie) Jackson then lived over 120 (air) miles away, in the vicinity of Nashport, Ohio, and that her family religious preference was strongly of Methodist persuasion, it challenges the imagination to gain a perspective…” Nelson L. Barnett, Jr., “Seven Generations of Barnetts: A Short History,” Honoring our Past: Proceedings of the First Two Conferences of West Virginia’s Black History, eds. Joe W. Trotter, Jr. and Ancella Radford Bickley (n.p., [1991]), 321, transcript in possession of author.

9 City of Huntington Common Council Proceedings from January 6, 1872, 17.

10 The Daily Press (Huntington), August 9, 1872.


12 There is some dispute to this claim. However, city records clearly show the First Baptist Church petitioning the city council for recognition first. Thus, it is the oldest recognized black denomination in the city. However, Ebenezer lays rightful claim to the oldest church edifice in the city.

13 Reverend Albert D. Lewis, “Before the Founding of Our Church,” Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and Community Center (n.p., 1930), Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 3. Lewis refers to Tucker as “Aunt,” but fails to identify whether designation is common usage or family relation.


16 Huntington Advertiser, November 4, 1875.

17 Chancery Order Book, Cabell County Circuit Court, W.Va., Book #3, December 29, 1873-April 12, 1879, 209. Although not cited in the original petition, it is believed that Jennie Hyder, possibly a member of the Hyder family who lived in Cabell County before the influx of the post-Civil War black migrants, was a founder. See Bickley, 135.
“Our History,” 126th Church Anniversary Ebenezer United Methodist Church, 1871-1997 (n.p., 1997), 1. Bickley states that the congregation “began worshipping on Spring Hill in the 1880s, possibly sharing space with another congregation.” See “Our Mount Vernons,” 123. Both Foes and Shafer, like Barnett, were illiterate at the time of their “calling,” a common occurrence for the era. In 1870 black laborer Foes was the father of two, while Shafer was a mulatto farmer and father of one. See Ninth Census of the United States, 1870.

The Huntington Advertiser, May 6, 1875.

Lewis, “Before the Founding of Our Church,” 3.

As Trotter explains, “Rooted deeply in the religious experience of southern blacks, the church in southern West Virginia helped to sustain and reinforce the black workers’ spiritual and communal beliefs and practices through sermons, revival meetings, baptismal ceremonies, and funeral rites.” Joe W. Trotter, Jr., “The Formation of Black Community in Southern West Virginia Coalfields,” Appalachians and Race: The Mountain South from Slavery to Segregation, ed. John C. Inscoe (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 286.

The Huntington Independent, September 11, 1873. Article states the name of the building as the “Union Chapel.” See also Huntington Advertiser, May 6, 1875, which reports “that a Union Sunday School is held every Sunday afternoon at 4 o’clock at the Third Avenue School house,” and that “on the First and Third Sundays of every month there is preaching there by city pastors.”

It is reported that the first financial contributor to the building was Deacon Alex Winston. See Lewis, “Before the Founding of Our Church,” 3. See also “History of the Church,” 116th Church Anniversary of First Baptist Church.

Notifications by Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal Church, Mt. Olive Baptist Church, the “Baptist Church (colored)” of Huntington,” and the Methodist Episcopal Church of Barboursville to the Cabell County Circuit Court list no black women as elected church trustees. See Chancery Order Book #3, 1873-1879, Cabell County Circuit Court West Virginia, 209; Chancery Order Book #4, 1879-1883, Cabell County Circuit Court West Virginia, 510; Chancery Order Book #6, 1888, Cabell County Circuit Court, 81, 267; Chancery Order Book #7, 1891, Cabell County Circuit Court, 385; and Chancery Order Book #10, 1897, Cabell County Circuit Court, 459-60.

In The Negro Church in America, historian E. Franklin Frazier provides valuable insight into the centrality of the church and male leadership in community formation when he states, “As a result of the elimination of Negroes from the political life of the American community, the Negro church became the arena of political activity. The church was the main area of social life in which Negroes could aspire to become leaders of men. It was the area of social life where ambitious individuals could achieve distinction and the symbols of status. The church was the arena in which the struggle for power and the thirst for power could be satisfied. This was especially important to Negro men who had never been able to assert themselves and assume the dominant male role, even in family relations, as defined by American culture.” E. Franklin Frazier, The Negro Church in America (The University of Liverpool, 1963), 48-9.


In no particular order, Barnett served at Macedonia, Mt. Olive Baptist, First Baptist Church of Burlington, First Baptist Church of Huntington, First Baptist Church of Glouster, OH, and First Baptist Church of Guyandotte. Bryant served at First Baptist Church of Glouster, OH, Bethel Missionary Baptist in Morgan Township, OH, African Zion Baptist in Malden, WV, as well as First Baptist of Charleston where he taught the black school at Baker’s Fork in 1888. See “History of the Church,” 116th Church Anniversary of First Baptist Church, 1; “Macedonia Missionary Baptist Church,” 150th Anniversary Souvenir Book of Providence Regular Missionary Baptist Association, April 15-19, 1984. James D. Randall and Anna E. Gilmer, “Black Past” (n.p., 1989), West Virginia Archives and History Library, Charleston, WV, 21, 52; and “Minutes of Macedonia Church, 1884-1896” (n.p., 1996), Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall


31 “Minutes of Macedonia Church, 1884-1896,” (n.p., 1996), Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 115, 118.

32 “Colored Baptist in Convention at St. Albans a Pronounced Success,” Charleston Daily Mail, June 1, 1895. In the early 1900s, Perkins would be the founder and president of West Virginia Seminary and College. See “Church History,” In Memory, Mortgage Burning Program, April 23, 1945, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and Community Center, program in possession of author.

33 “Colored Baptists Are Coming,” The Huntington Advertiser, August 24, 1898.

34 Cabell County Marriage Register, 2, 1853-1906, Cabell County Courthouse, Huntington, WV.

35 Ibid.


37 Barnett performed twenty-three, while Bryant performed twenty-six. See Black Marriage Records, 1851-1905 (Gallia County Historical and Genealogical Society and the John Gee Black Historical Center of Gallipolis, Ohio: Broussard Memorial Library, 2005), 56, 58, and “Mrs. C.C. Barnett,” Herald Dispatch (Huntington), November 30, 1909.

38 Huntington Advertiser, October 22, 1874.

39 An article citing a local church fundraiser and reprinted in a Huntington newspaper makes these points more explicit: “Rev. W.W. Foreman (colored) of the Methodist church preached in the grove on the flat to large congregations last Sunday morning and evening. Both sermons were very creditable indeed. The speaker seemed very familiar with his subject and handled it well. Quite a number of white persons also attended. A collection was taken up both in the morning and evening, and although no considerable amount was raised, all seemed to contribute something, and from this fact our white friends might draw a profitable lesson. The colored people contemplate building a church at this place soon.” See Huntington Advertiser, September 16, 1875.

40 Diary of Reverend William Parker Walker, August 15-August 18, 1877 entries, Archives, Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, Huntington, WV.

41 Ibid., August 13 and 14, 1879 entries.

42 Ibid., August 19, 1880.

43 Ibid. For entries on visits to the “Shops,” see February 10, March 10, April 26 & 28, May 10, 1881, and March 20, 1883 entries. For “visiting pastor,” see December 15, 1881, September 24, 1883, February 16, 1885, June 26, 1887 entries. For “welcoming” visiting pastor, see August 23, 1885 entry. While few, Walker did preside over ten black weddings in Huntington between 1882 and 1899. See Cabell County (West) Virginia Marriages, 1851-1899 (n.p., 1966), KYOWVA Genealogical Society, Huntington, WV.

44 In all cases, the accused were granted a meeting before a church appointed standing committee to state their side of the story. Given the increased social linkages with blacks and whites, concentrated population pockets, and small population, social ostracism from church congregants carried weight. Meeting before the committee and confessing to the transgression resulted in forgiveness by the church. The mission of the church was one of perpetuation and standardization of community sanctioned moral and ethical codes, not punishment. In this manner, the church attempted to propagate standards of decency and neighborliness. The church committee was not a court, and it did have a limit to its patience. A number of transgressors elected not to defend or explain themselves. Failure to show before the committee in a timely fashion resulted in the “hand of fellowship being withdrawn,” and the church member was officially removed from membership rolls. “Minutes of Macedonia Church,” 1-118. In this manner, black Baptist churches mirrored
white Baptist churches which also required strict requirements from its members. In March 1892, Huntington’s Fifth Avenue Baptist Church dismissed 143 members who later formed Twentieth Street Baptist Church. See Irene R. Brand, “Fifth Avenue Baptist Church, 1872-1930,” (master’s thesis, Marshall University, 1970), 80.

45 This action by Macedonia Baptist follows those of white Baptist churches. In 1878 Fifth Avenue Baptist passed a resolution stating “the modern dance is contrary to the spirit of Christianity, subversive of piety, offensive to God, grievous to all devoted pious people, and condemned by the outside world.” See Brand, “Fifth Avenue Baptist Church,” 81-2. Brown and Kimball argue, “By the 1880s, many activities, such as dancing, were barred from many church facilities, and the issue of whether it was immoral for church members to dance became a matter of serious debate.” See Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg D. Kimball, “Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond,” The New African American Urban History, ed. Kenneth W. Goings and Raymond A. Mohl (Thousand Oaks, London, and New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1996), 97-8, and Tera W. Hunter, To ’Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women’s Lives and Labors After The Civil War (Cambridge, MA and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1997), 168-186.

46 Sands, Sunday Times Sentinel (Gallipolis), February 22, 2004. Though his response is hidden from the public record, it is difficult to believe Bryant going against prevailing church doctrine and middle-class standards. Commenting on the issue of dancing, Tera W. Hunter notes, “Controversies over dance during the period reveal the power of dancing as a cultural form and the way it embodied (literally and figuratively) racial, class, and sexual tension in the urban South.” Hunter, To ’Joy My Freedom, 170-71.

47 Brown and Kimball elaborate on increasing black entry into the public space during the latter part of the nineteenth century, a development that also marked a concomitant shift in the primacy of the church as the lone public space “owned by African Americans.” In response to this development, and in the quest to distinguish themselves from secular places, church authorities sought to limit social activities in their buildings. Brown and Kimball argue, “By the 1880s, many activities, such as dancing, were barred from many church facilities, and the issue of whether it was immoral for church members to dance became a matter of serious debate.” See Brown and Kimball, “Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond,” 97-8. For chapter, see 66-115.

48 Though few, articles representing friendly, even equal social relations between blacks and whites occurred, Johnson explains only a few discuss the inter-racial working environment, since blacks were seen as both inferior and necessary to the city’s prosperity. Like newspapers nationwide, very little mention is made of hiring practices, promotions, or training situations. Instead, emphasis is on miscegenation, then considered a criminal offense, and on mixing of children in the classroom, an issue of considerable discord. Delores M. Johnson, “Not a Story to be Told: Discourse, Race, and Myth in Huntington, West Virginia Newspapers, 1872 and 1972,” (PhD diss., Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1995), 118, 129. Undoubtedly, Huntington’s black residents discussed and debated the question of integration yet no sampling of Negro opinion appears publicly in the newspapers printed in Huntington from June 1872 to February 1876, nor in the Macedonian Church Minutes of the era. Newspaper articles give some indication that Long was an integrationist but print media tended to convey all blacks as integrationists rather than pro-education. See Johnson, “Not a Story to be Told,” 120. No matter black sentiment, whites remained adamantly opposed to mixed race schools. Newspaper articles expressed distrust and hostility to the Radical Republicans over the Civil Rights bill proposing mixed race schools. An 1874 article asked, “Will West Virginia consent to have mixed race schools? Suppose she does not consent, what then?” Some months later, the question was again raised in the local newspaper, “Shall the party of Civil Rights and Mixed Schools get the power in the State and destroy the public school system as it did in North Carolina?” See Huntington Advertiser, January 29, 1874 and September 10, 1874.

49 Howard P. Wade, “Black gold and Black folk: A case study of McDowell County, West Virginia, 1890-1940,” (PhD diss., University of Miami, 1990), 190. For a detailed examination of the evolution of West Virginia legislative and legal process regarding primary and secondary education for the state’s black citizens, see Forrest Talbott, “Some Legislative and Legal Aspects of the Negro Question in West Virginia During the Civil War and Reconstruction, Part II,” West Virginia History, Vol. XXIV, No. 2 (January 1963): 110-120.
51 John Sheller, “The Negro in West Virginia Before 1900,” (PhD diss., West Virginia University, 1954), 219-220. Stephen D. Engle cites the needed class size in 1866 at sixteen students, reduced to fifteen in 1867 due to the scattered nature of black communities. In 1873, the numerical requirement was raised to twenty-five. See Engle, “Mountaineer Reconstruction,” 146.
53 Wade, 191-202. Noteworthy are the efforts of John R. Clifford, the state’s first practicing lawyer and editor, who challenged racial discrimination in schools before the West Virginia Supreme Court. In Martin vs. Board of Education (1896), Clifford asked the high court to allow an exemption for blacks living in rural school districts without black schools to attend white schools. He lost. In Williams vs. Board of Education (1898), Clifford continued his fight against segregated schools. Representing a black teacher in Tucker County paid to teach for only five months while white teachers taught and were paid for eight months, he won a civil rights victory when the State Supreme Court ruled that school boards had to provide equal pay for black and white teachers and keep black schools open for same term as white schools. In addition to the courts, Clifford fought for civil rights through his paper, the Pioneer Press. When it closed in 1917, it was the longest running black newspaper in the country. See Connie Rice, “J. R Clifford and the Struggle for Equal Rights in West Virginia,” *Conference Papers -- Association for the Study of African American Life & History*, 2004 Annual Meeting, Pittsburg, PA, [http://www.asalh.com](http://www.asalh.com), (accessed May 5, 2007), and “J.R. Clifford,” West Virginia Archives & History, [http://www.wvculture.org/history/clifford.html](http://www.wvculture.org/history/clifford.html), accessed on May 5, 2007.
54 Carter G. Woodson, “Early Negro Education in West Virginia,” *Journal of Negro History* 7 no.1 (1921): 51
56 “Makers of Providence History,” *150th Anniversary Souvenir Book of Providence Regular Missionary Baptist Association*, August 15-19, 1984, Gallia County Historical & Genealogical Society, Gallipolis, OH.
57 Guyandotte possessed the largest number with nineteen, followed by Barboursville with seventeen.
58 Huntington Independent, September 4, 1873 and September 11, 1873. See also George Selden Wallace, *Cabell County Annals and Families* (1935; repr., Baltimore, MD: Clearfield Company, Inc., 1997), 140. The building seems to have been rented as no records have been found of a city-owned edifice during this period. See *Grantor Index to Deeds, No. 1, L, from 1808 to Dec. 31, 1922*, and *Grantee Index to Deeds, No.1, L, from 1808 to Dec. 31, 1922*, revealed no record of any real estate transaction involving a Robert Long.
60 “Council Proceedings,” *The Huntington Advertiser*, October 22, 1874. Regarding historical conditions for the state’s Black teachers, Dr. Byrd Prillerman relays, “…it must be said to the honor of the school officials that absolute fairness is shown to the colored teachers both in the matter of examinations and salaries. If a colored teacher holds a first grade certificate, he is paid the same salary as a white teacher holding the same grade of certificate. If a colored teacher has ten pupils he has as long a term as any other teacher in the district…When one compares these conditions with the reports of the State Superintendent of Georgia for 1902, the contrast is very marked. According to his report, the average monthly salary paid white teachers that year was $36.72, and that paid colored teachers, $26.08.” See Byrd Prillerman, “The Growth of the Colored Schools in West Virginia,” *The History of Education in West Virginia*, 1907 (Charleston: Tribune Printing Company, 1907), 275-6.
61 *City of Huntington Common Council Proceedings from January 6, 1872, 122, 140, and 151*.
A History of Black Huntington, 4, and Rick Baumgartner, “First Families of Huntington.”
Reprinted from The Huntington Advertiser, 18 part series, 28 October 1976-24 March 1977,
Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 26-7.
(fall 1993): 22.
63 Huntington Advertiser, October 22, 1874.
64 In 1875, Cabell County possessed 58 schools, of which 57 were for white students only. See
“Council Proceedings,” The Huntington Advertiser, August 26, 1875. Booker T. Washington,
speaking of his educational experience in Malden, recalled, “This experience of a whole race
beginning to go to school for the first time, presents one of the most interesting studies that has
ever occurred in connection with the development of any race. Few people who were not right in
the midst of the scenes can form any exact idea of the intense desire which the people of any race
showed for education. As I have stated, it was a whole race trying to go to school. Few were too
young, and none too old to make the attempt to learn. As fast as any kind of teachers could be
secured, not only were day schools fill, but night schools as well. The great ambition of the older
people was to learn to read the Bible before they died. With this end in view, men and women who
were fifty or seventy-five years old would often be found in night school. Sunday schools were
formed soon after freedom, but the principal book studied in the Sunday school was the spelling
book. Day school, night school, Sunday school, were always crowded, and often many had to be
65 Huntington Advertiser, December 24, 1874.
66 In total, Wilson taught in Huntington thirteen years before relocating to Proctorville, Ohio, to
teach. During the course of his teaching career, Wilson attended Oberlin College in 1884, and
secured teaching jobs in Guyandotte and Barboursville, and Louisa and Blaine, Kentucky, before
leaving the profession and resettling in Ohio. For Wilson family history see, Martha J. Kounse snd
Sara M. Strohmeyer, “George Wilson Story, Part One,” “George Wilson Story, Part Two,” and
“George Wilson Story, Part Three,” African American History of Lawrence County, Ohio, 2004:
68 Wallace, Cabell County Annals and Families, 141. No information was found on the
designation, “Number 4 Certificate.” Both The History of Education in West Virginia and The
School Laws of West Virginia refer to three grade levels of teaching certification. As best as author
can determine, Number 4 refers to the lowest grade obtainable to teach within the county, and
perhaps the state, and was a type of provisional teaching certification, lasting four years,
implemented to meet the short-term needs of attracting qualified teachers. Some confirmation of
this analysis is revealed by a former Cabell County superintendent comments, “The history of
teachers’ examinations, in the State has been one of vexing variety to the teachers and school
officials, but has steadily moved forward in the direction of long term certificates for high grade
teachers, and frequent examinations for beginners …” See Ex. State Superintendent, B.L. Butcher,
Regarding Cabell County, Ira F. Hatfield, Cabell County Superintendent, alludes to the difficulty
of finding teachers when he notes, “These schools were presided over by teachers imported from
Ohio, Pennsylvania and other states, who, at best, possessed only the rudiments of education.” See
Ira F. Hatfield, “Cabell County,” The History of Education in West Virginia, 108. For regulations
of teaching certification, see The School Law of West Virginia and Opinions of the Attorney-
General and Decisions of the State Superintendent of Free Schools (Charleston: Will E. Forsyth,
Public Printer, 1897), 34.
There is some disagreement over the identities, title, and tenure of Huntington’s first black
teachers. Woodson relays this report, “The teacher first employed was Mrs. Julia Jones, a lady
who had most of the rudiments of education. Some old citizens refer to James Liggins as the first
teacher in this community. In this precarious status of stinted support the school did not undergo
any striking development during the first years. Not until 1882, some years after the school had
been removed to Huntington itself, was there any notable change.” Woodson, “Early Negro
Education,” 51. Quoted from original source, Principal J.W. Scott, “The Colored School of Huntington,” The History of Education in West Virginia, 1907 (Charleston: Tribune Printing Company, 1907), 266-7. Jones was from White Sulphur Springs, WV. The Great Annual Harvest Program of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church relays, “The first Negro school of Huntington was established in 1876. It was started on Spring Hill with less than ten pupils. Mrs. Chink Jones of White Sulphur Springs, W. Va., near Virginia, was its first teacher. Later, 1877, the school was moved to 12th Street, and in 1879 was moved to Holderby Grove. On account of increased enrollment, in 1881, one room was added and two teachers, Frank James and Mrs. Maude Johnson were employed. Later William McKinley was made principal.” See “Huntington Schools,” The Great Harvest Annual Program, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and Community Center, October 19-30, 1936, program in possession of author.

69 Plantania, “Getting Ready for Life: The Douglass High School Story,” 22. Plantania reports that after five years at his post Mr. James died followed seven years later by Mrs. James of an epidemic. Woodson challenges some aspects of Plantania’s account.

70 Estivaun Matthews, et al., eds Gallia One-room Schools: The Cradle Years, (Gallipolis, Ohio: Gallia County Historical Society, 1993), 77. The State Library of Ohio, Columbus, Ohio.

71 Woodson reports that Mr. James worked until 1886 by which time he had “brought the institution to the rank of that of the grammar school, beginning at the same time some advanced classes commonly taught in the high schools. He was an earnest worker, willing to sacrifice everything for the good of the cause. While thus spending his energy as a sacrifice for many he passed away respected by his pupils and honored by the patrons of the school. His wife continued for a number of years thereafter to render the system the same efficient service as the popular primary teacher upon which the success of the work of the higher grades largely depended, until she passed away in 1899. See Woodson, “Early Negro Education,” 51.


73 Ibid. “City Schools,” November 18, 1875 and December 30, 1875. The disparity between male and female daily attendance figures is largely attributable to the greater number of male students and the greater number of males in the general population. But one cannot rule out the fluid demands of childrearing, family care-taking responsibilities and household chores as well as the rigid nature of domestic employment impacted young school age females. Perhaps some black females or their families placed less value on the regular attendance of school. Or, perhaps the travel distance was too great or navigation too difficult. In truth, it could have been a combination of any or all of these reasons.

74 U.S. Bureau of the Census, Tenth Census of the United States, 1880 (Washington, D.C.: GPO). It is difficult to ascertain whether black females choose not to attend school or their family’s lack of financial wherewithal precluded such contemplation. What is known is that black women choose, for a time, to invest in the more viable option, namely employment and family. In a town with ever increasing affluence and great influx of single males, white and black, many no doubt predatory, it is reasonable to assume that black mothers sought ways to protect their daughters’ “respectability” and shield them from situations of potential ridicule, shame, or harassment. In a segregated society, both the street and the workplace offered little in the way of protection. Speaking on black women in twentieth-century Detroit, Victoria W. Walcott maintains that working-class African American women often found refuge in same-sex venues that discouraged hetero-sociability and were thus lauded by female uplift ideologues. Both working-class mothers and middle-class reformers continually sought ways to shield “their daughters” from the indignities and dangers of sexual assault and harassment. See Victorian W. Walcott, Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 24.

75 “City Schools,” Huntington Advertiser, October 24, 1885. Unfortunately, figures detailing the gender composition are lacking, preventing further examination of this phase of Huntington’s black school circumstance.

76 “Public Schools,” Ibid., November 21, 1885.

77 “Report of City Schools,” Ibid., December 19, 1885.

78 “Non attendance at the Public Schools,” Ibid. January 2, 1886.

Edward Albert Cubby relays that in 1890, in contrast to the State average daily attendance of 63 percent, the five southwest West Virginia counties of Boone, Lincoln, Logan, McDowell, and Wyoming, average daily attendance was 51 per cent. See Edward Albert Cubby, “The Transformation of the Tug and Guyandot Valleys: Economic Change in West Virginia, 1888-1921” (Ph. D. diss., Syracuse University, 1962), 43-4.


Edward Albert Cubby, A History of Education in West Virginia (Huntington, W.Va., 1951), 229.


Tenth Census of the United States, 1880.

See both Plantania, “Getting Ready for Life,” 21-27, and Ancella Bickley, “Our Mount Vernons: Historical Register Listings of Sites Significant to the Black History of West Virginia (n.p., 1997), West Virginia Collection, Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 118-122. Biographical information on McKinney published in 1895 includes the following: “He attended the public schools of his county until he was seventeen, at which age he began his first school, teaching in Fayette county (sic), W.Va. He has taught in the schools of his own home, in the schools of Charleston, and is now filling his seventh year as principal of the colored school of our city. He came to this city in the fall of 1889.” See “The First School Building,” The Huntington Herald, December 14, 1895.


See both Plantania, “Getting Ready for Life,” 21-27, and Ancella Bickley, “Our Mount Vernons: Historical Register Listings of Sites Significant to the Black History of West Virginia (n.p., 1997), West Virginia Collection, Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 118-122. Biographical information on McKinney published in 1895 includes the following: “He attended the public schools of his county until he was seventeen, at which age he began his first school, teaching in Fayette county (sic), W.Va. He has taught in the schools of his own home, in the schools of Charleston, and is now filling his seventh year as principal of the colored school of our city. He came to this city in the fall of 1889.” See “The First School Building,” The Huntington Herald, December 14, 1895.

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Edward Albert Cubby, A History of Education in West Virginia (Huntington, W.Va., 1951), 229.


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Edward Albert Cubby, A History of Education in West Virginia (Huntington, W.Va., 1951), 229.


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Edward Albert Cubby, A History of Education in West Virginia (Huntington, W.Va., 1951), 229.


Tenth Census of the United States, 1880.
school. In fall 1895, the West Virginia Collegiate Institute (not to be confused with the state institution) broke ground in Central City, along the western edge of Huntington. Arrangements were conducted with B.D. Elder to secure his residence and grounds as the site. The three-man Board of Directors, presided over by W. O. James, C.H. Duvall from Pittsburgh as secretary, and Reverend R.E. Brown from Dayton as manager hired Professor S.L. M. Francis of the West Indies as the Institute’s president. For the next year, various newspaper articles reported on the progress of the school, including the projection that fifty students were scheduled for enrollment upon its November opening. Yet, the institution met an ignominious fate, for in the spring of the next year, Duvall, the general manager of what was alternately termed the West Virginia Female Collegiate Institute/The West Virginia Normal Collegiate Institute, was arrested for obtaining goods under false pretenses. Moses Butler and W.O. James were among those posting bond for Duvall, and newspapers discontinue mention of the institution and no records concerning it have been found. Duvall’s arrest, the institution’s demise, and the lack of subsequent efforts to revitalize it, suggest attempts to found it were conducted poorly at best and at worse, encompassed little more than a scam. Huntington Advertiser, September 26, 1895, October 5 & 22, 1895, December 12, 1895, and January 3, 1896; and Ancella Radford Bickley, “Black People and the Huntington Experience,” 139. For particulars on charges and trial, see “C.H. Duval Bound Over,” Huntington Advertiser, February 3, 1896. Local newspapers alternatively use Duval and Duvall as last names. The author has elected to use spelling of last name presented in initial newspaper reference.

91 “The Douglass High School,” The Huntington Advertiser, May 11, 1901. Davis Opera House was built by B.T. Davis on the southeast corner of Third Avenue and Eighth Street in 1885 for $36,000. In 1892, after remodeling it was renamed the Huntington Theater. See James E. Casto, Huntington: An Illustrated History (Northridge, CA.: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1985), 62.

92 Two examples substantiate this claim. One newspaper article entitled, “Blue Grass Excursionists,” recounted the visit of “Eleven Hundred Colored People” to the city for the day. Another relayed in the fall of 1898, members of the Tenth United States Calvary passed through the city “in three long sections” of the C & O. It continued, “Every man below the grade of commissioned officer is of African blood and it is safe to say that a more gentlemanly soldiers have never passed through this city. For “Blue Grass,” see Huntington Advertiser, September 2, 1895 issue.  For “U. S. Calvary,” see October 10, 1898 issue.

93 Huntington Advertiser, August 15, 1895.

94 Starting in the late 1890s, local newspaper articles indicate the metamorphosis in the use of public space within Huntington. I attribute this phenomenon “to a growing assertiveness, increasing cultural maturation, and growing racial solidarity” of Huntington’s black community. For insight into Huntington see Fain, “The Forging of a Black Community,” 92-111. For a discussion on the ways blacks impacted the “moral geography” of southern urbanization, see Brown and Kimball, “Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond,” 97-98. In contrast to the immediate post-Civil War period when churches served as an uncontested public forum, performing a multiplicity of political and leisure purposes, and thus representing a variety of “space,” the claim and use of alternative secular venues by the black residents of the Ohio Valley was an overtly political act against the prevailing status quo. While suggestive of a commonality of circumstance and purpose by its participants against proscriptions from city whites, it was also a rebuttal against the city’s conservative middle-class religious elements, black and white, who attempted to circumscribe certain social activities.

95 Ibid., July 5, 1898.

96 Ibid., July 12, 1898.

97 The late-nineteenth century metamorphosis in the use of public space corresponds to a growing assertiveness, increasing cultural maturation, and growing racial solidarity, albeit to varying degrees and in differing ways, of black enclaves throughout the South. It also helps to gain access to the ways public space was perhaps contested by Huntington’s black residents in an urban environment, what Elsa Barkley Brown and Gregg D. Kimball, in their study of late nineteenth-century Richmond, label “the ‘moral geography’ of southern urbanization.” Brown and Kimball, “Mapping the Terrain of Black Richmond,” 97-98. In contrast to the immediate post-Civil War period when churches served as an uncontested public forum, performing a multiplicity of political and leisure purposes, and thus representing a variety of “space,” the claim and use of alternative secular venues by the black residents of the Ohio Valley was an overtly political act against the prevailing status quo. While suggestive of a commonality of circumstance and purpose by its participants against proscriptions from city whites, it was also a rebuttal against the city’s conservative middle-class religious elements, black and white, who attempted to circumscribe certain social activities.

98 In 1929, at the West Virginia State Education Association convention held in Huntington, the official journal of the convention trumpeted the city’s economic clout: “Not only does Huntington


105 “Brevities That Will Interest You,” The Huntington Advertiser, September 22, 1902.


107 Carrie Simmons, “Huntington, W. Va.,” The Pittsburgh Courier, September 9, 1911.

108 Walter and Ida Myers, interviewed by Jackie Fourie, 11.

109 Before her untimely death in 1909 Gallipolis native and teacher Katherine “Kate” A. Barnett (formerly Whiting), the first wife of Dr. C. C. Barnett, was said to be one of the Home’s staunchest advocates. Married in Gallipolis in 1901 by Rev. I. V. Bryant, the Barnetts were married only a short eight years. Barnett married nurse Clara B. Matthews of Farmville, Virginia, in October 1912. In 1920, the Barnetts established the Barnett Hospital and Nurses Training School, with Mrs. Barnett designated as superintendent. See Karen and Johnny Nance, Draft Proposal: Rehabilitation of the Historic Barnett/City Hospital (n.p., 2006), transcript in possession of author, 3-4, and Barnett, “Seven Generations of Barnetts,” 325.

110 “West Virginia Colored Orphans’ Home,” The West Virginia Review, Vol. II No. 12, (September 1925): 444-45, Special Collections, Cabell County Public Library, Huntington, WV; and “At Colored Orphans Home” and “Many Visitors were Present,” The Huntington Advertiser, September 29 and October 2, 1900, as well as May 13, 1904, and June 23 & 25, 1904 editions.


112 Ibid.

Hairston (nicknamed ‘Coonie’), the residents were taught to farm and care for the orchard that was on the place. Additionally, they learned to make bricks, taught by a craftsman that Booker T. Washington sent from Tuskegee. In the first years, Rev. McGhee supported the home through donations received from churches and individuals. In addition to money, donors sent barrels of clothing. Although ordained as a Baptist minister and having spent some time pasturing churches in Bluefield and its vicinity, Rev. McGhee did not have a church in Huntington. Rather, his daughter says, he saw his work with the home as his mission.” See also “West Virginia Colored Orphans’ Home,” The West Virginia Review, Vol. II no. 12, (September 1925): 444-45, Special Collections, Cabell County Public Library, Huntington, WV; and, “At Colored Orphans Home” and “Many Visitors were Present,” The Huntington Advertiser, September 29, October 2, 1900, as well as May 13, 1904, and June 23 & 25, 1904 editions. Census data derived from Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900; Roll T623 1756; Page 20B: Enumeration District: 6.

114 Huntington (West Virginia) Directory, 1891-2, Potts & Cammack, comp. (Hamilton, OH: Hamilton Publishing Company), 57-8, Special Collections, Cabell County Public Library, Huntington, WV.

115 The Huntington Herald, December 14, 1895. All cited black fraternal orders originated after rejection by white charters. The first secret society for black people was the African American Freemasonary, formed in 775 by prominent black Bostonian Prince Hall. Based on the principles of international brotherhood and universalism, the black Masons appealed to many middle class black men who believed in the ability of Masonic ideals to overcome racism. The Grand Lodge of Odd Fellows began in Philadelphia, after black Englishman, Peter Ogden, who had initiated a charter in Britain, assisted a Negro group to acquire a charter form the English Grand Lodge in 1834. Formed in 1854, the Household of Ruth was the women’s auxiliary of the Odd Fellows. The Knights of Pythias also stressed the ideals of brotherhood and universalism. The Black Knights of Pythias formed after a group of black people were denied a charter by the New York Grand Lodge of the white Pythians in 1870. Remarkably, mulattoes passing as whites infiltrated the lodge and acquired access to the secret rituals and by 1880 had established their own grand lodge and begun chartering local lodges. Formed in the mid-1890s, the Independent Order of St. Luke centered their agenda on the development and maintenance of community based economic interests and achieved notable success in cities throughout the south. The Order not only admitted women but elected them to their top leadership positions, with Maggie Lena Walker, who was elected to be the Right Worthy Grand Secretary, being the most notable. See Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History, 1996 ed., s.v. “Fraternal Orders and Mutual Aid Societies,” by Peter Schilling and Daniel Soyer. For information on the growth of benevolent and fraternal organizations within the State, see Trotter, “The Formation of Black Community in Southern West Virginia,” 289-90.

116 For example, Principal William McKinney was a member of the Odd Fellows, the Knights of Pythias, and the Free Masons. See “The First School Building,” The Huntington Herald, December 14, 1895. The nature of development of Huntington’s black institutions makes important links to Kenneth L. Kusmer’s examination of “the positive ways” black organizations, institutions, and leadership impacted black community formation. Joe W. Trotter illuminates the importance of these organizations to southern West Virginia when he argues participation in institution-building activities by African Americans reflected and stimulated the rise of vigorous black leadership. See Kenneth A. Kusmer, A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930 (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1976), and Joe W. Trotter, Jr., “The Formation of Black Community in Southern West Virginia Coalfields,” 285.

117 For quote, “reinforce communal and spiritual aspects…” see Trotter, “The Formation of Black Community,” 290. Reporting on the corner-stone laying ceremony of the First Baptist Church of Huntington, one newspaper article relayed, “Many colored persons from Charleston, Hinton [West Virginia] and other points east on the C. and O. were present. The members of the Masonic Lodge, colored, turned out in a body.” See Huntington Advertiser, 28 September 1896. The fact that black benevolent societies arrived in Huntington a full twenty-five years after the city’s formation and the onset of significant black migrant influx is perplexing, especially given the urgency that Huntington’s black residents addressed its educational and religious aspirations. By 1881, Portsmouth, Ohio, housed both a branch of the Colored Masonry, started August 21, 1872,
and a branch of Colored Odd Fellows. See *Portsmouth City Directory, 1881-2* (Cincinnati, OH: Spencer & Craig Printing Works, c.1882), 31, 33. A lodge of the Order of Twelve, “a colored organization exclusively, based upon the secret order formed in 1852 to operate the famous underground railroad system, and operated since the emancipation upon beneficiary principles,” was formed in Ironton, Ohio, in 1888. See the *Ironton Register*, February 9, 1888.


120 “Negro Pythians are in Session,” *Huntington Dispatch*, August 5, 1908.


In the end, the ratification of a new constitution was achieved, revising much but not nearly comprising the revolutionary agenda first envisioned. Among the key provisions left intact: The right of black citizens to vote and seek public office remained, as well as a free but segregated public school system.


125 *Huntington Independent*, September 4, 1873.

126 No mention of Long is revealed in the 1860, 1870, or 1880 Cabell County census, the 1880 West Virginia state census, or the 1870 Lawrence County census. Marriage records include a Robert Long, twenty-nine, son of W. and N. Long, married Susan Titts, twenty-three, daughter of T. and E. Titts, in July 1872. See *Cabell County (West) Virginia Marriages, 1851-1899* (n.p., 1966), KYOWVA Genealogical Society, Huntington, WV, 86.

127 See *Huntington Independent*, April 24, 1873, September 4, 1873, October 16, 1873, and *Huntington Advertiser*, September 24, 1873, for examples.


130 See “Colored Meeting,” *Huntington Advertiser*, March 26, 1874, April 2, 1874, and “Political Speaking,” September 24, 1874.

131 In marked contrast to the disenfranchisement of black citizens throughout the south, Trotter argues, “black coal miners in southern West Virginia exercised a growing impact on state and local politics. West Virginia blacks developed a highly militant brand of racial solidarity, marked by persistent demands for full equality, albeit on a segregated basis.” See Trotter, “The Formation of Black Community,” 291. Notably, at a time when blacks helped shift the balance of power in the state to the Republicans after two decades of Democratic rule, they largely failed to make significant inroads within the party. The notable exception was in McDowell County where the pioneering achievements of blacks there, including the 1888 election of Christopher Payne, the State’s first black legislator, forced the Republican Party to respect the black vote. Wade relays, “There were several outstanding men in this pioneer group: Christopher Payne, Samuel Starks, James Hazelwood, Phil Waters, H.H. Railey, James M. Ellis, John Neal, J. McHenry Jones, J. R. Clifford, Stanley McNorton, and J. Rupert Jefferson; they were the vanguard of West Virginia’s Black political leaders.” See Wade, “Black gold, Black folk,” 141. Also see Posey, *The Negro Citizen*, 38. Part of this circumstance can be traced to low voter turnout. In the 1896 Cabell County municipal elections, Douglass School House registered only 32 voters. See “The Result in Cabell,” *Huntington Advertiser*, 5 November 1896.

132 In 1897 W.O. James assumed a position within the city government and was cited for his expertise by a local newspaper, “The Advertiser has much pleasure in commending the efficiency and promptitude with which William O. James is discharging his duties as Assistant Street Commissioner.” See “Holding Up His End,” *The Huntington Advertiser*, June 10, 1897.


134 A condensed summary of the “grand affair” notes, “The bride wore a beautiful albatross, black lace and natural flowers. The groom was attired in conventional black. The ladies’ costumes were up to date in both style of fabric and make. We are sorry we haven’t space of each lady’s costume, but suffice it to say that the fashionable modiste [sic]) was favorably represented. The gentlemen
wore the ever fashionable cut away and Prince Albert. [After] Some excellent vocal and instrumental musical selections… we were invited out to take our place at tastefully prepared tables that groaned beneath the load of good things pleasing to the sight and palatable to the taste. After supper[,] games and plays were engaged in until a late hour.
The presents were handsome and useful. A club of ladies and gentlemen gave a beautiful dinner set, consisting of one hundred and two pieces, one salad set, one celery stand, two olive dishes and a twelve piece chamber set. Other presents given were a five piece tea set, cup saucer and plate, cup, saucer and two plates, one large meat platter, three handsome fruit dishes, olive dish and two fruit dishes and a beautiful china and silver ornament." The Huntington Herald, February 28, 1896.
Newspaperman Rick Baumgartner Hill’s recounted his aspirations thusly: “A Republican by persuasion, Dan also had visions of wielding great political power. From time to time he would get out of step with his party and on more than one occasion he announced that on a given evening he would make a speech on 3rd Avenue and 9th Street to ‘expose the party’s inequities.’” Wallace relays that Hill never ran for office, and states, “Dan was a character. Dan would put in his appearance well in advance of the hour set for speaking, clad in a Prince Albert coat and wearing a plug hat. In every instance but one Dan was placated and abandoned his purpose of speaking.” See George Selden Wallace, Cabell County Annals and Families, 221.
136 The Cabell Record (Milton), February 24, 1898, KYOWVA Genealogical Society: Huntington, WV.
137 Huntington Advertiser, October 3, 1898.
138 Ibid., March 3, 1899 and April 8, 1899
139 “Editorial,” Ibid., April 18, 1899.
140 “Earning His Daily Bread,” Ibid., March 18, 1899.
141 Ibid., On white backlash, see April 18, 1899 issue. On black vote, see March 27, 1899 issue.
Black males of voting age in the county were 499.
143 Huntington Advertiser, April 7, 1899.
144 “A Political Argument,” Ibid., April 4, 1900.
146 “The School Board in Politics,” The Huntington Advertiser, July 6, 1900.
147 “Barnett Roasted the Bosses,” The Huntington Advertiser, July 29, 1900. Carter G. Woodson succeeded Barnett as principal, with Scott retaining his position as assistant principal. See The Huntington Advertiser, September 15, 1900.
148 “A New Era in Politics,” The Huntington Advertiser, February 8, 1898.
149 “Douglass League Held Meeting,” Huntington Dispatch, June 10, 1908.
Chapter 7: Afro-Huntingtonian Life during the Early Twentieth Century.

We have gotten out of the cellar, so to speak, and that means much. Our eyes are beginning to open. The proverbial short-sightedness of the first Negro settlers who refused to buy real
estate when land was cheap was a racial blunder from which we suffer today. Yet a few
who brought their families or who married out here were wise enough to buy homes.--
Professor J. W. Scott, 1911.¹

This chapter examines the nature of Afro-Huntingonians’ collective
response to increasing Jim Crowism within the city in five ways: First, by
providing a broad contextual overview of black peoples’ response—migration and
political agitation—to Jim Crowism within southern West Virginia; second, by
studying the ways—political, socio-cultural, and economic—black Huntingtonians
challenged the hardening of the color line in the city; third, by illuminating the
ways the city’s black residents embraced racial uplift as a conduit of self-pride,
self-help, and self-determinism; and fourth, by examining the shifting spatial
contours of black residential settlement within the city, the development of racial
covenants, and the construction of ‘colored’ Huntington.

Huntington experienced a phenomenal population explosion during the early
twentieth century. Between 1900 and 1910 the city’s population grew by an
exceptional 161 percent, soaring from 11,923 to 31,161 inhabitants. White
residential population grew by a remarkable 171 percent. Black residential
population rebounded from the dip experienced during the previous decade,
nearly doubling to 2,140, an increase of 77 percent. By 1900, black residents
hailed from thirteen states, including significant increases in the population of
Kentuckians, North Carolinians, and Tennesseans.² That year, illustrative of the
continuing influx of families, black male/female population was nearly equal at
605 and 607 persons, respectively, a dramatic shift from 1880 when black males
comprised 62 per cent of the black population.\textsuperscript{3} Even more dramatic, in 1910, nearly 80 percent of Huntington’s blacks had migrated to West Virginia.\textsuperscript{4}

Mirroring national developments, Huntington city leaders implemented various measures to contain and constrain black aspirations, to varying degrees of success. One of the most enduring was the construction of “colored” Huntington. Over time, with the tacit agreement of city officials and the general population, white realtors designated both white-only neighborhoods augmented by racially “restrictive covenants,” and a black-only residential subdivision. In this manner, they mirrored and implemented segregationist practices throughout the nation during the nadir of Jim Crow.\textsuperscript{5} Within the next decade, assisted by urban growth and continuing migrant influx throughout southern West Virginia, Huntington solidified its place as the second largest city in the state (see Table 2).\textsuperscript{6}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Population of Huntington, West Virginia\textsuperscript{7}}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Census Year} & 1890 & 1900 & 1910 & 1920 & 1930 \\
\hline
\textbf{Total Population} & 10,108 & 11,923 & 31,161 & 51,177 & 75,572 \\
\hline
\textbf{White} & 8,876 (87.8\%) & 10,709 (89.1\%) & 29,009 (93.1\%) & 47,276 (92.4\%) & 70,925 (93.9\%) \\
\hline
\textbf{Negro} & 1,231 (12.2\%) & 1,212 (10.2\%) & 2,140 (6.9\%) & 2,883 (5.6\%) & 4,630 (6.1\%) \\
\hline
\textbf{Other} & 1 & 12 & 2 & 8 & 17 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Source: Thirteenth Census (1910), Fourteenth Census (1920), and Fifteenth Census (1930).

So extensive was black migration into the southern West Virginia coalfields and urban-industrial centers, that between 1890 and 1910 West Virginia was the
only southern state to increase in total population. An infusion of northern black migrants also contributed to the population increase in the region. In his study of African Americans in West Virginia, historian Joe W. Trotter found that only about twenty-one percent of the state’s blacks lived in the southern counties in 1880. By 1910 that figure had climbed to 63 percent. In conjunction with black migration into southern West Virginia, thousands of European immigrants also settled in this region. Southern West Virginia’s population increased dramatically throughout the region from approximately 80,000 in 1880 to nearly 300,000 in 1910. The immigrant population from southern, central, and eastern Europe grew from 1,400 in 1880 to 18,000 (six percent of the total) in 1910. African American growth outpaced foreign growth, expanding from 4,800 in 1880 (six percent of the total) to over forty thousand (fourteen percent of the total) in 1910. These numbers represented over twice the proportion of European immigrants in the southern part of the state and transformed the region into a “contested zone” of social tension and labor strife as native-born, European immigrants, and African Americans competed for jobs, housing, and hegemony.

Notwithstanding the increasing numbers of blacks and immigrants into the region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, West Virginia remained overwhelmingly “white” in its racial composition and mentality. A Huntington newspaper article trumpeted in 1904 that, out of all the states in the Union, West Virginia “has the largest proportion of native white inhabitants,” and that “out of every 1000 persons … 955 are white and only 45 are colored.” While the implementation and observance of Jim Crow era practices did not
remain static, undoubtedly white political power and notions of racial superiority remained a source of pride and unity for many whites in southern West Virginia. Former Confederate Henry Clay Ragland, the editor of the influential newspaper the *Logan County Banner*, no doubt articulated the thoughts of many when he congratulated an Ohio mob in 1897 for lynching an African American who had attacked a white women: “It is always very well to prate about the majesty of the law and the viciousness of mobs, but when a lady is criminally assaulted by a brute, the people who are the creators of the law, become superior to the enactments of their legislatures and the machinery which they have established for their execution.”\(^\text{12}\) For Ragland and other racist whites, the primary failing of the Negro was moral. As one writer contended, “the real basis of the ideology of white supremacy was moral: blacks were innately inferior morally. This meant, simply, that nonwhites lacked a super ego, a set of built-in restraints, guilt, or other curbs on the libido.”\(^\text{13}\) For Ragland, the only black men worthy of recognition were those who were deferential, a point he reiterated in a eulogy for long-time black Logan County resident “Uncle Dan” Howard who “was always polite and knew his place.”\(^\text{14}\)

White West Virginian state and municipal authorities characterized race relations in their state as “benevolent segregation,” yet black aspirations and individual assertion were subject to social circumscription, economic constraint, and, on occasion, physical violence.\(^\text{15}\) Encapsulating the character of race relations within the state during the early 1900s, one authority relays,
West Virginia may well be called a place of paradoxes in race relations. For example, the segregation and exclusion of colored persons is generally practiced by privately managed places of public accommodation, amusement, and refreshment, but except on railway trains entering from and departing states south of West Virginia, common carriers of passengers for hire do not segregate such passengers according to race or color. Street railways and motor buses for hire treat white and colored passengers alike. West Virginia has no “jim-crow” law, nor does it have a “civil-rights” law to prevent “jim-crowism” from being practiced. In only one realm of “socio-race” relations is racial conduct prescribed by law. This realm is miscegenation.  

As early as the late-nineteenth century the deteriorating state of race relations in southern West Virginia captured the attention of state officials. Evidence of growing localized white resentment within the state and the threat to civil order is described in an 1898 letter from State Attorney General Edgar P. Rucker to Hugh O. Woods, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney of Princeton, West Virginia. In the aftermath of the killing of an unarmed, black woman in the Mercer County town of Bramwell, and the unwillingness of local authorities to apprehend the perpetrators, Rucker warned,

There is no crime that is a more direct attack on the stability of the law than that of lynching. Unless something is done to put a stop to it, the time will soon come when we must admit that self-government is a failure. In recent years it has grown in frequency until now even some of the sworn officers of the law seem to connive at it and sympathize with it.  

16

17
In the state’s history, West Virginians lynched twenty-eight blacks, the vast majority from the southern region of the state and after the turn of the twentieth century.\(^{18}\) In addition to public lynching, an unknown (and unknowable) number of near lynchings occurred across the state. In response to the escalating threat of racial violence in southern West Virginia, black delegates from that region twice introduced antilynching legislation in the state legislature in the early part of the century before an antilynching law eventually passed in 1921.\(^{19}\)

Local newspapers which covered lynchings or near lynchings conducted in adjacent states illustrated the potentially corrosive power of the white-controlled press in the era of Jim Crow. In their quest to illuminate incidents of white mob action and their right to extralegal action, West Virginia’s newspaper facilitated an implicit threat against incidents of local black assertiveness. This point is especially important in light of Charles S. Johnson’s observation that increased incidences of lynchings in the Deep South did not dissuade black migrants from a particular area where employment opportunities existed.\(^{20}\)

Both of the first two black men executed by the state arrived in the state as migrant laborers from the South. Furthermore, the disproportionate number of African Americans executed in West Virginia remained particularly high during the first thirty years of the century, coinciding with the rise of the state’s coal industry and its affiliated influx of black migrants and European immigrants. In fact, at no time from 1899 to 1928 did the black population ever comprise more than 5.7 percent of the general population, yet it accounted for nearly sixty-one percent of the total persons hanged by the state, the vast majority of whom resided
in the of the southern coalfields. Certainly, for many of the state’s black residents, segregation in the coalfields was more malevolent than benevolent.

Huntington was not immune from the threat of mob violence against black residents during the early twentieth century. The most serious incident occurred in August 1911, when, after the alleged murder of Harry Withrow, a “well-regarded,” white assistant C & O section foreman, by section hand Charley Clyburn, reportedly “a brutal, ignorant negro,” area whites attempted to lynch him. First gathering near the C & O Railroad and Eighth Avenue on Sunday night, August 2nd, a mob of fifteen “started the ball rolling by catching some negro whose name could not be learned and hammering him up a little.” By the time the mob reached the court house it had grown in number and frenzy, ably assisted by one white “who asked for volunteers to go with him” and “go lynch the nigger.” The following evening, a second attempt was made in which “hundreds of people followed [the] leaders.” Forced to respond, city authorities declared martial law and dispatched a militia, complete with riot guns, and a fire company. After using streams of water to disperse the crowd, a number of arrests were made, ending the threat. Another incident ended more tragically. After a “foreign or black man” shot a C & O detective after being pulled off the train for not having a ticket, the “Patch men” formed a posse with guns and horses to apprehend him. After capturing the man in Reservoir Hill, near the C & O Shops, the posse killed him, “tied his body behind a horse and dragged him from the top of the hill all the way down to the middle of 28th Street.”
One related, but more subversive, aspect of white coercion during the Jim Crow era was the existence of “sundown towns,” in which whites mandated, through the threatened or actual use of violence, that blacks vacate a town by sundown. Wheelersburg, Ohio, located to the north of Huntington, was one. Within Cabell County, Milton was not only a sundown town, but its residents clearly intended it to be an all white one.24

As the industrialization of West Virginia compelled increasing numbers of native whites, European immigrants, and African Americans into the region, the fluidity borne of this process regularly produced fractures within the hegemony. This dynamic operated within working-class-relationships, sometimes mitigating the strict adherence to and enforcement of Jim Crow. Frequently within the intimate confines of the railroad camp, mining towns and urban-industrial cities, cordial relations between the races could and did exist. Before moving to Huntington, then teenager John T. Walton worked in a company store in southern West Virginia in the early 1900s alongside “Dumper,” the African American store driver. Walton’s recollection of his experiences with Dumper is instructive:

I always went with Dumper. But the color of his skin didn’t mean anything to me, I asked him one time when I was younger, I said Dumper why don’t you wash that black stuff off your hands. And he just laughed and laughed and he laughed and he told everybody in the camp that Buckwheat told him to wash the black spots off his hands. And he explained to me that that was the color of his skin and he was very well satisfied and I said well how do you know when you’re clean. He said when you feel clean.

…that was actual fact that, uh, that poor thing that took nearly half of his thumb off [due to a misdirected sledgehammer blow] and, uh, and but he didn’t stop he just said, he
grabbed his, uh, bandanna handkerchief out of his hand, er, pocket and wrapped it around there he said ‘hit that steel, hit that steel.’ I just kept on but he was wonderful ain’t no two ways about it. But that, uh, that taught me a lesson right there that, that uh, some people have control of themselves and other people don’t. I had a lot of, uh, uh, the blacksmith was a colored man and I had, the ones that drove the, the mules in the mines several of those were black men and they were all my friends, everyone of um we just had a big time.25

Walton’s remembrances illuminate not only the cordial relations between him and Dumper and other black laborers but also the esteem he had for them. Unquestionably his fond memories of Dumper detail enduring educational experiences provided by the elder black man. There is little doubt that in the “intimate spaces” of interracial contact that existed across southern West Virginia, cordial cultural exchanges between the races informed and educated each group, despite the presence of Jim Crow. Commenting on the nature of race relations during the era one scholar notes, “segregation matured amid the contradictory but complementary forces of modernity and antiquity, coerced labor and a thriving free labor market, racial distance and racial propinquity.”26 Indeed, one white Huntington resident of the interracial working-class enclave, “the Patch,” recalls, “There was never any trouble between colored people and white people in the Patch. Us kids would fight one day and play the next just like any kids anywhere.”27 Certainly, the low numbers of black residents in the Patch, and the fact that black students, unable to attend the neighborhood white school, walked a mile to Douglass Elementary and Douglass High School reduced the opportunities for the development of racial animus.
During the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Huntington’s African American migrants who were older were frequently forced to acclimate, negotiate, and navigate a kaleidoscope of racialized interactions. While state and city officials and urban industrial employers actively recruited African Americans, touting the benefits of settlement, employment, and cordial race relations, the state’s white residents sought ways to constrict black entry, constrain black aspiration, and circumscribe black autonomy. Yet, the fact that the intervention of city authorities thwarted mob action illuminates the differing perspectives maintained by white authorities attempting to uphold the law against that of white residents seeking extra-legal measures to subvert it. Moreover, although the state’s black residential population never reached a number or percentage that threatened the prevailing power structure it did possess sufficient concentration in certain areas to threaten the economic status and belief systems of localized white populations.

Though, notably, no black Huntingtonian held any city council seat during any of the years of this study, in truth, as long as the city’s black residents recognized and operated within the racial status quo (especially regarding restrictions against miscegenation) life in Huntington offered a great deal. “Keeping one’s place,” however, failed to stem the tide of Jim Crow era racism and the city’s black residents sought out ways to re-calibrate race relations for greater social and/or political equality.

One avenue to address their continuing marginalization was for black women to embrace the fellowship and agendas of female-centered endeavors. Although there is evidence of working-class black female activism in the Ohio
Valley, most efforts were grounded in the middle-class philosophy of respectability.\(^3^0\) Black women’s efforts extended the indigenous networks rooted in community and demonstrated that they were capable of creative responses to the economic, social, political, and racial barriers preventing their full inclusion into American society. In the process, black women, hoping their efforts would help refute the racial notion that all black women were immoral, embraced the moral tenets of the late-Victorian era.\(^3^1\) Although middle-class black women were affected by the Victorian-era ideal of “true womanhood,” their efforts encompassed a significant difference. The duty of ideal white women was grounded in the domestic sphere where they attempted to oversee the moral development of their children, and maintain the moral development of their husbands.\(^3^2\) In contrast, ideal black womanhood bridged both the private and public spheres. At a time when black men throughout the south and in Huntington were denied entrance into the public political arena, black women’s public and political contributions provided an important aspect of black political organization.\(^3^3\) The ideal black woman was educated, race-conscious and often worked outside the home. As one historian relays, “Middle-class respectability and gender created space for black women to contest racism. In black communities, the ideal of black womanhood did not detract from black women’s femininity. Black communities utilized the talents, energy and expertise of all of their members to combat racial discrimination. Black women were politicized through the club movement, church activities, reform work and education.”\(^3^4\)
Throughout the early twentieth century, the efforts of female Afro-Huntingtonians embodied this ideology. Callie Barnett, mother of Dr. C. H. Barnett, was an active member of First Baptist, did sewing to supplement her husband’s income, and was a member of the Afro-American Improvement Society, and the local Temperance Society. In 1900, the Charleston-based West Virginia Branch of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs began looking into supporting the Huntington based Colored Orphans Home. That same year, black Huntingtonian and Douglass High teacher Mrs. Amanda Miller Coleman, wife of Reverend James D. Coleman, presented a talk on “‘The Up-to-Date Woman’ [setting] forth many qualifications essential to a well developed woman,” to the Women’s Missionary Society of Charleston, an auxiliary to the Woman’s State Convention. In 1909 the “‘Hoop Drill’ by twelve little girls for the benefit of the Ladies Mite Missionary Society was well received and quite a success by way of entertainment and finance.” In 1910, the Dunbar Sisters Literacy Society, consisting of seventh and eighth grade girls and of the high school, performed school related programs. That summer a band of “young Misses of the Orphan Home” progressed nicely under the leadership of Miss. Lucy McGhee. In 1911, the committee for woman’s day celebration at the A.M.E. church was comprised of Mrs. Emma Bromley, Carrie Simmons, and Lula Johnson.

The educational process initiated and maintained by these various entities not only involved inculcation of an individual achievement orientation, but also instilled the centrality of moral vision embodying commitment to the community.
Black Huntingtonian Revella E. Hughes’s life story also informs this ethic and is suggestive of the importance of child-rearing strategies to the success of black professional women. These strategies historian Stephanie Shaw contends, “transformed individualistic notions of self help and the so-called Protestant work ethic into an ethic of socially responsible individualism” in which the relatively few black women who achieved formal education were “looked to, encouraged to, and expected to ‘take up the crosses’ of those who were less able than they.”

Before achieving international fame as Carmella Dusche, the singer, musician and performer, and eventual Douglass High music teacher Revella Hughes, developed her artistic talent within female-centered networks. Born in 1895, to George and Anna B. Page Hughes, Miss Hughes began playing piano under her mother’s tutelage at the age five. As a girl she served in the choir at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, traveled to Charleston and Institute, West Virginia (home of West Virginia Colored Institute), to perform in community-centered teas and socials, and entertained patrons in the homes of local black leaders. Although she attended Douglass High School, Hughes transferred to her mother’s alma mater, Hartshorn Memorial College (“the world’s first college to train African American females”), in Richmond, Virginia. Chartered in 1884 to “to train colored women for practical work in the broad harvest of the world,” Hartshorn was, at the time, an American Baptist Mission school. After receiving her diploma in music in 1909, she returned to Huntington, attended dinner parties, traveled, hosted guests from other cities in the state, and taught music. Hughes then attended Oberlin High School in Oberlin, Ohio, graduating in 1915. From
Oberlin, Hughes went to Howard University in Washington, D. C., where she studied voice and piano. After graduation with her Bachelor of Music degree in 1917, she remained in Washington to teach at the Washington Conservatory of Music for one year. After a short stint as director of music at Orangeburg State College in South Carolina, Hughes traveled to New York City in 1920, launching her onto a remarkable career trajectory. In spite of her world-wide travels, Hughes considered herself a Huntingtonian, and often returned to the city to visit family or perform.43 No doubt the efforts of the above women, like those of black women nationwide, positively impacted their self-esteem, and helped to reinforce communal values and connections, while assisting black political aspirations.

In truth, black women’s aspirations were constrained by white society and black men, who embraced attitudes and behavior that had little changed over the decades. Throughout the early twentieth century, as men moved up to positions of greater responsibility, women, remained largely locked into the two fields of teaching and nursing. For instance, in Cabell County, all the 7 African Americans who took the teacher’s examination of 1904 were women.44 In 1895, Josephine Barnett began her forty year teaching career at Douglass High, retiring from the school possessing the record for the most service of any teacher in the city’s school system.45 After graduating as a valedictorian from Douglass in 1911, Nellie Francisco, denied entrance into Huntington’s Marshall College, attended a normal school in Bluefield, West Virginia, from which a student could receive a teaching certificate. After obtaining her college degree from West Virginia State College, Francisco returned to Douglass in 1915, teaching all subjects through the
eighth grade. For the next fifteen years, she taught in Huntington as well as in the coal fields of southern West Virginia.⁴⁶

Black men suffered constraints as well in their professional aspirations. One important aspect of Douglass High, and doubtless other black high schools around the nation, was the employment of high proportion of African-American male teachers. In 1903, building upon the accomplishments of the previous generations, Walter A. Smith and Lloyd G. Smith, members of the “Traveler” Smith family, acquired jobs at Douglass. For many, teaching (and preaching) was the only available profession, despite their schooling and credentials. In 1903, Huntington’s public schools employed fifty-nine teachers and principals. Of the fifty-two white teachers, the only males listed were a high school principal and one of his assistants. However, of the 7 teachers at Douglass, three were male.⁴⁷

After graduating with an architecture degree from Ohio State University in 1918, Carl Barnett became a teacher, waiting thirty years before being able to practice his profession. “No firm was interested in me,” Barnett states, “as soon as they saw the color of my skin they changed their minds.”⁴⁸

One professional avenue within black high schools open to black males but denied black females was coaching athletics. In 1915, the legendary Zelma Davis assumed his post as coach and soon established football at the school. A graduate of Municipal College in Louisville, Kentucky, Davis’s coaching career is remarkable for its length and level of success. During his forty-year tenure, Douglass won 11 state championships and 234 games, including 33 straight games from 1935 to 1938. Despite playing the best African-American high school
teams in the state, including Charleston’s Garnet, Beckley’s Stratton, Clarksburg’s Kelly Miller, Parkersburg’s Sumner, and Bluefield’s Genoa Senior, his football teams failed to achieve a winning record only twice. In track, his team won its first state championship in 1919, before reeling off five consecutive state championships from 1921 to 1925. Four times his basketball teams advanced to the Negro National Championship Tournament.49

Black leaders reminded whites of the black historical presence in and contributions to the city’s betterment. In early 1907 Marshall College (now Marshall University) invited avowed white supremacist South Carolina Senator Ben “Pitchfolk” Tillman to speak. Due to the overwhelming demand for tickets, the university changed the venue for his lecture from a campus auditorium to a local theater. Black response to Tillman’s invitation began shortly afterwards. By early March growing animosity to his visit prompted one local newspaper to report that black residents were expressing “a threatening attitude” (through the promise of physical protest), towards Tillman’s impending arrival.50 In a 1907 petition reprinted in the Huntington Advertiser, prominent black leaders, including Douglass teachers, J.W. Scott, J. B. Hatchett, Josie M. Barnett, Mina E. Stewart, George Scott, and I.V. Bryant and S.A. Thurston, pastors of First Baptist and Sixteenth Street Baptist, respectively, called for city leaders to recognize the immorality of Senator Tillman’s platform, and to deny him a venue.51 Though ultimately rebuffed in their effort to have the mayor forbid Tillman’s appearance, the published response illuminates both the nature and limits of black middle class resistance strategies.
Douglass students, however, used more confrontational methods. In February 1909, a series of conflicts between black students of Douglass and white children occurred, resulting in what was labeled a “serious clash,” involving “twenty or more” and drawing a crowd of “hundreds.” While the ongoing cause of the “racial difficulties” was not revealed, the protracted character of the tensions, the intensity of the scuffle, and the willingness of the students to exchange blows is instructive. The school students’ were not afraid to assert themselves and utilize methods they deemed best to deal with the issue(s), methods that probably conflicted with those advocated by their teachers, the black middle class, and certainly with white authorities.52

While the methodologies utilized by students and their teachers differed, both were grounded in an articulated and operational consciousness of individual and collective self-worth. In May, Dr. Lewis B. Moore, dean of the teachers college of Howard University, addressed the graduates and audience at the 1909 Douglass High commencement, advising them, “Much has been done for the Negro to lift the dark cloud which was a heritage of slavery and to save the country from the abyss yawning beneath it. But race progress can be measured not by what is done for a race but only by what the race does for itself.” Moore also reminded the audience of the uniqueness, enormity, and promise of black progress, “Every other people have gone down before the white man but the negro. He is the first man in history who has looked the white man in the face.” Lastly, Moore reassured whites that segregation was amenable to both races.53 Moore’s statement contains no overture to the gathering to emulate or replicate
whiteness as the norm. Instead, his remarks advocate dignity, self-affirmation, and a positive black identity as the individual goal and ideological foundation of race advancement.

In 1911, Professor Scott also articulated the self-help philosophy, albeit in a more conciliatory fashion than Dr. Moore. In his remarks to the members of the Huntington Y.M.C.A., he stated, “Any community is bound to move upward if it has within itself the influence of clean homes, good churches, and efficient schools. This trinity of social forces stands for industry and cleanliness, obedience and reverence, discipline and intelligence. With these agencies we must yet develop all the classes that belong to a well organized social group.” In conveying their visions, both Moore and Scott offered expressions of the Self-Help philosophy embraced by the African American middle class. As Kevin K. Gaines notes, “for many black cultural elites, uplift described an ideology of self-help articulated in racial and middle-class specific, rather than in broader, egalitarian social terms.”

In concert with Douglass High’s evolution, black churches and fraternal organizations continued to flourish. By 1911, J. W. Scott, then principal and teacher at Douglass, noted the existence of four black churches: First Baptist, Sixteenth Street, Young Chapel A.M.E., and Ebenezer M. E (relocated to Artisan Avenue and Sixteenth Street in 1909). Scott also noted seven lodges, including two units of the Pythians’ and a Knights of Pythian Brass Band, the Masonics’, the True Reformers’, the Odd Fellows, the Hod Carriers’ Union, and the Elks.
The three-story brick Knights of Pythias Hall was valued at $15,000. For women, there were branches of the St. Lukes and Household of Ruth.56

One additional response utilized by black Huntingtonians to Jim Crowism was travel. Just as large numbers of African Americans arrived into the city to take advantage of its varied attractions, large numbers of the city’s black residents also traveled outside its borders. In the mid-1900s, local newspapers, via columns alternately entitled “Colored Notes,” “Colored Folks,” and later, “Afro-American Notes,” respectively, began chronicling the socio-cultural experiences of middle-class black Huntingtonians, providing greater insight into “hidden transcripts” of their daily activities.57 Many of these journeys, as well as others chronicling black life in the city, were carried in The Pittsburgh Courier, part of the vanguard of “race” newspapers, along with Robert Abbott’s The Chicago Defender and W. E. B. Du Bois’ magazine The Crisis, that sprang up during the early 1900s.

By the mid-1920s, both the Defender and Courier were selling hundreds of thousands of copies, with the Courier providing extensive coverage of the lives of black West Virginians. Huntington’s first correspondent to the Courier was Carrie Simmons. An 1897 graduate of Douglass, Simmons worked, along with her mother, Fannie, as a servant in the home of white William Banks in 1900.58 By 1910, both had departed his employment, and, probably with the aid of Simmons’s brother Frank, a railroad brakeman, moved into Fannie’s home at 1648 Eighth Avenue. There, the three resided with her two-year-old son, a cousin and a domestic.59 By spring 1911, she was forwarding her reports, which covered a variety of topics, including health, funerals, travels, relocation, parties,
marriages, and pageants. Also included were her reports of black female organizations and/or groups like The Ladies Aid Society, the Ladies Sewing Circle, and the Rising Sons and Daughters. In general, these societies were comprised of church-going members who paid dues that were distributed through activities that embraced a larger commitment to community uplift and moral reform. Simmons observations (and that of other community correspondents, including a number from the towns and cities from southern West Virginia) were printed in a column entitled “Afro-American Cullings.”

Many of these activities related directly to increasing physical segregation. As discussed earlier in Chapter 4, Buffington Row lay astride the southern of the C & O tracks. Just south of the Row, on the other side of the railroad tracks, along Eighth Avenue, lay an area eventually comprising three major subdivisions between Sixteenth and Twentieth Streets, forming the nexus of a growing black residential concentration (see Figure 2). Primarily an agricultural area prior to 1890, these three enclaves—Addition No.1, Holderby Addition, and the Ceramic Subdivision—met three objectives. First, they ensured Huntington’s continued expansion southerly. Second, they offered a boon for the area’s real estate speculators that resulted in a record $900,000 in new real estate construction in 1904. Lastly, they helped mark the borders of ‘colored’ Huntington. Two recent studies by geographer Jacqueline A. Housel are crucial to examining the shifting racial contours of Huntington’s residential population.
Map. 7.1 Map of Huntington, West Virginia, 1921. Source: West Virginia and Regional Library Collection, West Virginia University Libraries
The first, completed in 1998, compares settlement patterns of Artisan and Doulton Avenues in the early 1900s. The second, completed in 2002, examines the formation of Huntington’s first “black” residential enclave. These studies help illuminate the historical foundations contributing to the construction of ‘colored’ Huntington.63

It is clear that a pattern of black settlement began emerging with the formation of the racially integrated subdivision of Addition No. 1 in 1880. This area, bounded by the railroad to the north included Eighth and Ninth Avenues, Sixteenth and Twentieth Streets, as well as Artisan Avenue. By 1879, both of Huntington’s first black churches, First Baptist and Ebenezer Methodist Episcopal (later Ebenezer United Methodist) occupied sites on opposite ends of Eighth Avenue, illustrating the southerly shift of Huntington’s black migrant population. Located several blocks to the west of the embryonic black residential core, First Baptist rested near the western edge of a scattered black migrant population. In contrast, Ebenezer stood on the eastern corner of Sixteenth Street, much closer to Huntington’s embryonic black residential center and the increasing influx of poor black migrants who settled there.64 The establishment of Douglass High School, on the western corner of Sixteenth Street and Eighth Avenue, provides further evidence of this developing pattern. Commenting on the housing patterns in Addison No. 1, Jacqueline Housel states,

Typically shot-gun houses with a few I-frame houses were constructed on small lots (30 by 85) or half lots with little if any yard space. Its location midway between the central business district and the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company shops were ideal for a
household where two or more workers were needed to provide an income and where workers were often subject to inconsistent, part time employment. Working long hours for low pay, employees found convenient and cheap housing. The historical origin of Artisan Avenue in the early twentieth century reveals an interracial composition as black and white migrants sought affordable housing. Real estate speculators subdivided land into smaller lots that were less expensive than those in adjacent subdivisions, thus providing greater opportunity for buyers to meet the negotiated monthly or quarterly payments. African American buyers included Superintendent of the State Missions Reverend Robert D.W. Meadows, who purchased a lot in 1903 on which he resided with his wife and five daughters. Virginia-born widow Eva Edmunds purchased two lots and built a house in order to reside with her daughter and four boarders. Sydney Coger purchased a lot for $250 that had been purchased three days earlier for $156 by real estate broker J. M. Fuller. The vicinity also included black churches such as Young African Methodist Episcopal Chapel, located on the corner of Eighteenth and Artisan, and the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. Established in 1905 by forty-one former members of First Baptist, formally organized under the leadership of Reverend Meadows, the church was erected between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. Reverend James D. Coleman served as its first pastor. Ceramic Subdivision, containing Doulton Avenue, lay south of Addison No. 1. Subdivided in 1905 from excess land owned by the Huntington China Company, the district included Ninth Avenue, Ritter Avenue to the south, and Sixteenth and Twentieth Streets, with lots that sold for $300 each. The racial
composition of Artisan and Doulton Avenues reveals a sharp contrast in the racial residential patterns along the two avenues from Sixteenth to Twentieth Street. While Artisan was forty percent African-American and sixty percent white, Doulton included only three black households. Further, Housel shows that the black population along Artisan clustered from Sixteenth to Eighteenth Streets.  

South of the Ceramic Subdivision, just east of Sixteenth Street, lay the twenty-two acres comprising the Holderby Addition. Despite containing smaller lot sizes than Ceramic, Holderby’s 125 lots, subdivided in 1903, possessed a number of selling points. Purchase in the district provided an elevated location, wide fifty foot avenues, fifteen foot alleys, an option of buying an adjoining lot at the auction price, a short distance to the streetcar line, and inclusion into an all-white neighborhood. The advertisement for the lot sale stated, “One feature of the sale that will be met with universal approval is that the lots will be sold only to members of the Caucasian race, and no deed will under any circumstances be granted to any other.” This advertisement provided an explicit warning to Huntington’s black residents that this area was off-limits, while reassuring white residents that purchasing a home protected them from the black-migrant onslaught. As the city struggled to adjust to the demographic changes and economic growth, the civic leadership and residents initiated “the construction of ‘colored’ Huntington”.

Huntington’s black population paid attention. By 1910 Artisan Avenue became home to an occupationally diverse black population, from clergymen, physicians, and teachers, to laborers, barbers, and porters. In her study of Artisan
Fig. 3. Map of Washington Place Subdivision, 1904. The Huntington Land Company

Avenue’s racial composition in 1920, Housel reports that “the ratio of black to white households stood at 40:60 in 1910, but ten years later the ratio reversed to 60:40 with a doubling of the number of overall households. These statistics tend to hide the level of segregation. At all times, black households clustered in the interior of the street while white households faced or lived near the major boulevards.” Housel’s evidence provides compelling evidence that the process of residential segregation was well underway on Artisan by 1920. The metamorphosis in black residential patterns should not overshadow the fact that significant numbers of black residents purchased property on the avenue throughout this period.

The establishment of an all-white enclave coincided with the founding of an all-black one. Built on a marsh, originally on the western edge of the old Holderby family farmland, newspapers advertised Washington Place as being “exclusively for coloreds.” Located on the western side of Sixteenth Street and subdivided in 1905, its boundaries included Shelton Lane to the west and two small subdivisions that abutted the railroad tracks to the north (see Figure 3). Housel reports,

For whites, Washington Place functioned as both a plug and a buffer. The plug was a designated place where the ‘coloreds’ who had accumulated assets could buy property and build their own homes. Thus, it was not necessary for blacks to buy property in ostensibly white areas. It also served as a buffer zone, strategically located between the ghetto and middle class suburb.
Owned by real estate developer and avowed former Confederate J. H. Cammack, who, along with his partner J. H. Potts, developed much of Huntington’s South Side, Washington Place served two purposes. First, it allowed Cammack to profit directly from blacks as they purchased his property. Second, it afforded indirect benefits from their inability to move into white areas and the possible resultant negative impact on property values. Not all residents were working class though. In 1900, Rush Smith and Theodore “Doug” Brown were the proprietors of a restaurant on Front Street in Catlettsburg, Kentucky. In 1907, Smith, the father of Edna Duckworth purchased a lot in Washington Place with a $50 down payment. By 1910, he and his wife, Georgia, resided in a modest house at 1415 Tenth Avenue. Two years later, they welcomed their first child, Edna, into the home, where she resided until her death in 2002.73

Although “benevolent segregation” represented a potent manifestation of white racism throughout Huntington, it fails to explain two things: 1) why did white Huntingtonians think it necessary to implement restrictive measures? and 2) why during this time period? Given that Huntington’s black population never comprised more than approximately 10 percent of the general population during the twentieth century, these questions beg consideration.

Certainly, there is no evidence that any element of black Huntington posed a direct threat to the livelihood, status, or security of white Huntington. In fact, as indicated in Table II, although Huntington’s black population increased numerically from 1900 to 1910 it decreased proportionally to its white population. Moreover, in 1910, the percentage of native whites within Huntington was 87.6
percent, the highest in the nation for cities possessing 25,000 to 100,000 in population. However, some answers are derived from the convergence of key developments. First, in 1910 Huntington’s black population comprised 87 percent of the county’s total, forming a daily presence that could not be ignored. Second, as discussed above, along with the continuing presence of the disreputable element associated with black-owned clubs within the business district, black crime was on the upsurge, with increasing incidents of violent crime. Along with the chronicled exploits of the more notorious, Sam Graves, Mrs. Lottie McQueen, and Charles Ringo, to name a few, newspaper articles portray a city under outraged over adult and juvenile crime. Both had grown especially troublesome to white authorities by the turn of the century, with juvenile crime garnering increasing attention. Increasing migrant influx contributed to rising numbers of idle youth. As early as 1898 the city council had adopted a “Curfew Ordinance, requiring children under 15 years of age to be off the streets by 8 o’clock in Winter and 9 o’clock in Summer.” In 1900 Huntington possessed four hundred black youths between the ages of 5 and 20, more than any other city in the State, save Charleston. On any given day, many could be found loafing around city saloons. An additional factor in juvenile crime might be attributable to industrial practices within the state. As in the case of women, the state’s industries had historically precluded the hiring of children. As one authority noted, “There were 6,212 children between 10 and 15 years employed in West Virginia in 1870. They comprised 5.4% of the total working population. The same year the percentage of child workers in the United States
was 20. In his report for 1904, the State Commissioner of Labor was ‘proud to report’ that West Virginia employed 38.6 adults to one child worker under 16 whereas corresponding figures for North Carolina and South Carolina were 5.7 and 4.6 respectively.” 79 In effect, although practices within the state greatly limited the employment of children and the attendant hazards, it removed one potential solution to help address the problem of wayward youth.

By 1900, Eighth Avenue, from Eighth to Twentieth Streets, formed the artery through which the collective life force of Huntington’s black community coursed. Fully 20 percent of the city’s black residents lived on it. 80 Most of the petty crime was centered in (or adjacent to) the predominately black, racially mixed, working class neighborhoods, with Eighth Avenue especially vulnerable. Thus, crime was a product of proximity and opportunity. As one article relayed, “The attention of the police had been directed to a gang of young hoodlums, white and black, who infest the corner of Eighth avenue and Eighteenth street, making life a burden for people who live in that neighborhood. Information at Jackson’s store, which stands on this corner, brought out the fact that such occurrences as the above take place frequently. The boys range in age from ten to seventeen years.” 81 The continuing problem of vagrancy and petty crime and its locus within the increasingly black area of Eighth Avenue was surely noted by many, and might have served as a incentive for those contemplating residential zoning laws and restrictive covenants as a way to bottle up the problem.

Another likely justification is the increasing acquisition of property by black Huntingtonians. Between 1890 and 1900, black residents purchased thirty-three
properties, an indication, J.W. Scott relays of accelerating economic maturity during the first decade of the new century:

Compared with the first 20 years of the city during which our people bought 23 pieces of real estate or about 1 piece a year we have averaged during the past ten years one piece of real estate per month. From 1900 to the present there has been a tremendous relative increase in the buying of homes… The total value of property purchased by … 140 Negroes during the past ten years runs up to $161,650. There are ten colored persons—eight men and two women—in the city whose combined properties will amount to $100,000. Altogether there are 190 property holders and the valuation of their real estate holdings amount to $382,650. These figures make a convincing argument that the Huntington Negro is solving the housing problem. 82

Some real estate transactions involved land on the periphery of Huntington’s residential section, in the largely undeveloped tracts located in the surrounding hills and valleys. Discussing early-twentieth century settlement patterns, Afro-Huntingtonian Walter Myers relays,

My father and aunts told me that most of the blacks could not buy property in what is known [as] the flatlands from the Guyan River to Twelve Pole. They had to buy property on the hill. The flatlands were farmlands all through this area. And they bought property along Fifth Street Hill…Spring Hill and Walnut Hills. They lived in all of that area up until nearly the ‘30s. They had hundreds of acres out there. Beautiful land. It’s still beautiful land… My grandparents owned most of…Walnut Hills area, and a lady named Mrs. Black owned from the boulevard, Hal Greer [then Sixteenth Street] Boulevard, back past 18th Street, she owned all that area… 83
The historical record largely validates Myers contentions. Denied the ability to purchase land on the rich river bottom flatlands by the historical presence of whites, many of the city’s black residents increasingly purchased land in the hills surrounding the city. In 1910, Anna M. Black purchased six acres for $1600 on 20th Street and Enslow Avenue, behind Spring Hill Cemetery.\textsuperscript{84} In addition to purchasing lots in Central City and Huntington, some in conjunction with her husband, C.S. McClain, during the late 1890s and early 1900s, Mary E. McClain purchased two one-acre plots of land behind Spring Hill Cemetery adjacent to Norway Avenue, one in 1907, the other in 1914, on which Bethel (Crossroads) Cemetery would be established. By 1920, Bethel served as the primary burial site for C.S. McClain and Fred, his eighteen-year-old son, who were Huntington’s first black undertakers.\textsuperscript{85}

Sometimes migrants utilized alternative methods to cash to first acquire land. One authority believes migrant Davy K. Allen first occupied the hill near Four Pole (Creek) as a squatter before eventually acquiring it through the Huntington Land Company.\textsuperscript{86} In fact, in September 1907, Winnie Allen purchased six acres land on what is now known as Fifth Street Hill near the Wayne County line from the Huntington Land Company for $300, with a deposit of $50, and three notes due of $83.33 each. Interestingly, in June 1910, she and her husband, David, sold those same six acres to their son, Luster, for $1.00, who then sold it back to the father on the same day for the same amount.\textsuperscript{87} For many Afro-Huntingtonians, the purchase of residential property on the outskirts proved to be a sound investment strategy. As the population increased and the city
spread, land values increased. Moreover, the purchases demonstrated their faith in the continuing promise of the city and its black community.

By the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century, a small class of black professionals existed within the city. In fact, in 1911, Simmons relays “some of East Huntington’s progressive citizens, along with the ministers and professional men, met at the A.M. E. church and organized a local Negro Business League. The following officers were elected: Dr. B. F. White, president, Dr. E. Johnson, vice president; Professor Hatchett, secretary; Prof. J. W. Scott, assistant secretary, and W. T. Smith, treasurer.” From 1912 to 1917, Huntington’s first black dentist, Dr. William G. Capel, practiced in the city. The formation of an articulate, competent, and educated professional class encompassed a slight but important shift in the development of black Huntington away from the historical predominance of the black worker. It marked the beginning of the second generation of black Huntingtonians whose increasing initiative, affluence, and influence challenged perceived threats to their well-being, culminating in a legal challenge to the use of restrictive covenants in the city, and ultimately, their abolition in 1929 in *White v. White*, discussed later in the chapter. Black professionals also found “space” to operate within the system, a development repeated throughout the South.

The first black hospital within Huntington opened in 1912. The creation of the hospital by Dr. C. C. Barnett, son of Rev. Nelson and brother of C. H. Barnett was arguably the most ambitious effort of early-twentieth century black Huntington. Trained as a physician and surgeon, Barnett became Assistant City
Physician for the city in 1906. It was not until 1909 that the first black ward was added to a city hospital. Moreover, black patients were consigned to white doctors because black doctors lacked hospital privileges. Such circumstances invariably impacted the health and welfare of blacks needing care, and sometimes led to tragic consequences. In one case, miner Walter Brown, in transit through the city, fell from a train in the C. & O. yards and was horribly mangled. Denied entrance into the C. & O. hospital, Brown lay on the ground for long hours until finally admitted into the Kessler Hospital, where he died on the operating table. Although an extreme example, it is hard to imagine, Barnett, “a rather imposing figure who made friends easily, and … politically astute,” being unaware of this incident or similar ones in which black people suffered discrimination or worse. In 1912, he established a thirty bed hospital on Seventh Avenue, which served the needs of the city’s black residents until 1929.

A fourth possible reason for the imposition of racial covenants is suggested by the rise of the Socialist Party within West Virginia, generally, and Huntington specifically, and its overtures to the black working class. During the early twentieth century the Socialist Party of America made strong inroads among the state’s industrial workers, especially among its coal miners. During its short tenure from 1913 to 1915, Huntington’s *Socialist & Labor Star* actively recruited black members by reminding them first of their value as workers and the precariousness of their situation at the bottom of the economic ladder, and second, by asserting their rights to human dignity, albeit within a segregated environment:
Colored people are becoming conscious of their dignity, and their responsibility to develop toward the white man’s plane of social value. They are raising their standards of living, and are demanding better wages, while the trade union is slowly making its way into their confidence. These facts worry the big business interests in the South of today, which is the South turned over by the landowner to the factory owner and railroad managers. Something must be done to humble the black laborer, and to prevent his children from wanting to become anything else than laborers.94

Their call did not go unheeded. Emblematic of the Socialist Party’s growing effectiveness to capitalize upon spreading worker dissatisfaction to economic insecurity and growing wage inequities, local and state membership rolls increased significantly during the early 1900s. For instance, in the two presidential elections of 1908 and 1912, votes cast by West Virginia Socialists increased from 3,679 to 15,336.95 The election of 1912 resulted in the capture of numerous local political offices throughout the state. The vote for Eugene Debs, the Party’s presidential candidate, represented a 300 percent increase over the 1908 total and “the largest increase in Socialist voting anywhere in the United States.”96 Locally, anxiety and anger contributed to growing influence by the Party in the city. Numerous accounts in the Labor Star detail frequent lay-offs and shutdowns by the city’s largest employees, C. & O. and American Car and Foundry Company (formerly Ensign Manufacturing Car Works), contributing to what it claimed was “an appalling list of Huntington suicides within a short period” due to, among other causes, low wages.97 In September 1914, the “colored citizens of the East End,” formed the first black Socialist local in the city. Situated at Woodson Hall on Eighth Avenue, the paper claimed the “new
organization starts off with quite a large membership and unbound enthusiasm …” The following week, the paper proclaimed that “Over fifty colored workers have signed applications to membership in the Socialist party,” enough to establish a Sixteenth Street Local, “if these can be welded into a fighting force at the meeting scheduled this week.”98 By October, seventy-five black workers had signed application cards and when combined with white locals in the Central, Western, and Southern ends of the city, represented a growing working-class movement.99

On January 1, 1915, the Socialist & Labor Star folded. Yet, one authority relays, it is important to realize that the Socialists of the Labor Star were allies of the trade union movement in Huntington as well as in the southern West Virginia coalfields. Thus, the Party was able to draw from railroad brotherhoods that populated the towns along the C. & O. line, including a nucleus of workers from the Shops in Huntington.100 Yet, notwithstanding those black workers who submitted applications and formed lodges, it is difficult to believe the Party garnering many more black members beyond the numbers cited. In his study of the Party in Charleston, David Corbin relays that less than one-fourth of the members belonged to the unskilled classification, with one-half of those workers employed at one glass factory. Commenting on black members of the Charleston local, Corbin states, “Conspicuously absent were members living in the ‘slum sections’ of Charleston such as the infamous ‘triangle district,’ the negro section, and the centers of ethnic groups. Only two negroes were members, and they were both professors at West Virginia State College.”101
While impossible to ascertain which specific development(s) initiated the concerted white response resulting in restrictive covenants, increasing black economic clout, cultural autonomy, and social assertiveness surely played a part. Moreover, it is no coincidence that the legalization of residential segregation coincided with the emergence of a generation of black Huntingtonians who had no direct experience with slavery and who were becoming increasingly knowledgeable of their rights. White realtors realized money could be made from the sale of property to this new class of black Huntingtonian. The physical boundaries of Washington Place and its orientation, in relation to Addition No. 1 (just south, on the opposite edge of Sixteenth Street), hardly seem accidental. Here white Huntingtonians, embodying the practices and attitudes attached to Jim Crowism, attempted to centralize Huntington’s black residential population through restrictions and neighborhoods designed to contain them. The construction of Douglass Junior and Senior High School within Washington Place in 1907 further solidified this process. Furthermore, the later development of Huntington’s South Side, a middle-class suburb of wide boulevards, park setting, and large brick homes to the south of Washington Place, further constrained black aspirations. By 1913, the homes in this neighborhood and those to the west carried a racial restriction on each deed. Thus, in large measure, the construction of ‘white’ enclaves was achieved not by state-mandated initiatives, but by local real estate developers with the complicity of Huntington’s white residents.
Certainly, examination of the motivations behind black settlement into Washington Place is warranted. Historical precedence demonstrates that there is nothing particularly unique about black migration into Huntington or settlement into the subdivision or, for that matter, into any of the countless other ‘colored’ enclaves that dotted urban America during the early twentieth century. African Americans remained transitory and aspirational, availing themselves of economic, political, and/or sociocultural opportunities to better themselves. Yet, continued progress remained a difficult challenge for the race. Scott notes, “The business world of the other race is inaccessible…Color prejudice stands with a drawn sword at every entrance to keep him out. But it is worse than useless to lament over the situation. Our only way out is Self Help.”

For those who could afford it, Washington Place offered an expression of the Self-Help philosophy embraced by the black middle class. Examination of the Barnetts and Woodsons, migrant families who arrived together from Buckingham County, Virginia, into Huntington shortly after its founding in early 1871, offers insight into this process. Acquiring employment with the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad shortly after their arrival, then itinerant preacher Nelson Barnett and his brother-in-law James Woodson raised their families and built lives in the growing town. By the late 1890s, as detailed, the children of these two families helped comprise the first members of Huntington’s black professional class. It is noteworthy that members of the Barnett and Woodson families purchased seventeen residential and investment properties in Washington Place between 1906 and 1914, surely benefiting the material well-being and aspirations
of their families. In fact, in 1906 Walter Myers father, Walter Myers Sr., purchased a lot from Nelson Barnett. Five years later he purchased a second lot in Washington Place from the Huntington Land Company.

Washington Place signaled increased self-esteem, prosperity, security, and provided proximity to schools, churches, and businesses, and community, for those who sought it. It also offered the most explicit expression of class stratification within black Huntington. Property acquisition within the subdivision offered “distance” from whites and the black working poor, a not inconsequential consideration for many buyers.

Ultimately, property acquisition became the most important manifestation of progress for those with middle-class aspirations. As Scott observed, “There is no other feeling like the feeling that comes to a man when he can point to a piece of property and say, ‘That belongs to me.’” However, home ownership constituted only one of many steps towards the goal of good citizenship. Many black Huntingtonians recognized that their livelihood and status quo depended also upon cordial relations between the races.

To ensure ongoing genial relations, Huntington’s black leaders, like those across the nation, embraced two-pronged approach, one that uplifted the race, the other that reassured the city’s whites. To the city’s black residents they espoused a prescriptive vision ensconced within the “Self-Help” philosophy of black responsibility and Christian education. Scott’s maxims of “good citizenship” included: 1. Have an object in view. 2. Be systematic. 3. Always pay cash. 4. Be honest. 5. Never borrow for small things. 6. Don’t gamble. 7. Leave liquor and
tobacco severely alone. 8. Live the simple life. 9. Work as hard to save as to make. 10. Trust in God and keep busy. By abiding by these rules, Scott contended that, “when you quit the shores of time your influence will still remain and your memory will rest like a benediction over the community in which you lived.”

Undoubtedly, many, perhaps most, black Huntingtonians endeavored to embody the above principles.

The mutual construction of race and place encapsulated by the utilization of restrictive covenants and the establishment of Washington Place illustrates the ways white Huntingtonians utilized strategies and techniques to inscribe race onto space during the first part of the twentieth century. This process was two-fold. First, during the transitional period of the early 1900s, “residential segregation shifted from being driven by social practices to a legally enforced practice maintained by the use of restrictive deeds and covenants.” Second, the city’s phenomenal growth led to the growing concentration of blue-collar workers in the suburban areas seeking proximity to industrial jobs and a white urban middle-class seeking proximity to the city’s business centre. Improvements in Huntington’s infrastructure—transportation, communication, electricity, water and sewage, the continuing growth and diversity of Huntington’s manufacturing and textile industries, and the mechanization of agriculture helped shift factories away from the central business district to un- and underdeveloped areas on the periphery. In effect, as Afro-Huntingtonians and whites settled into social behavior and residential settlement patterns mandated by legal measures, residential segregation realigned the city’s urban space into racialized enclaves.
In significant ways, David Delaney’s historical study of Louisville is instructive, for he revealed how the attitudes of whites towards the city’s blacks served not only to distinguish the relationship as patriarchal, but also define the expected behavior of the two groups. Just as in Huntington, it was “understood that Louisville was a better than average town where ugly, brutal, open racial friction was not an accepted thing.” Both cities prided themselves on their benevolent approach to segregation, in which spatial boundaries were clearly established and a local black elite established and maintained a black institutional framework with good schools and churches, the hallmarks of middle class values. Yet importantly, for our purposes, Louisville’s black residents agitated in a variety of ways to shift the nature of power relations. One significant victory occurred in the decision rendered in 1917 in Buchanan v. Warley. In the case brought by the N.A.A.C. P. to challenge segregation, the U. S. Supreme Court found race restrictive zoning laws that prohibited blacks from moving into white neighborhoods, and vice versa, unconstitutional, on due process grounds. While the most far-reaching decision of the era, Huntington’s whites paid it no heed.

Despite the covenants (and maybe because of them), the city’s black residents continued to believe in the power of property acquisition as a means to long-term financial stability. In 1920, amongst a growing number of black-owned businesses, a black-owned real estate firm opened, drawing praise from one local paper for the continuing economic success of the city’s black residents as well as the initiative of the new entrepreneurs:
It may surprise a good many people to know that there are better colored homes in Huntington than any other city in the state, and probably on average better than any other city in the country. A number of colored residents own homes valued at $10,000…Henry Brown, of the firm, told the Herald Dispatch yesterday that the tendency of the colored race in Huntington was toward the ownership of its homes, and he said that this was having a tendency to greatly improve an already high order of colored citizenship. Both members of the firms are hustlers and their success is assured.

By 1924, 60 percent of Afro-Huntingtonians owned their homes, a higher figure than either the black residents of Clarksburg (54.7%) or Charleston (45.8%). The aggregate worth of black real estate holdings was approximately $1,400,000, a significant increase from the roughly $400,000 total worth cited by Professor Scott a decade earlier. In large part, black Huntington’s success was linked to a vigorous home ownership campaign initiated during the latter part of the previous decade and sponsored through the cooperation of several ministers and leaders from both races. The interracial campaign directly resulted in 67 black residents purchasing homes and lots throughout the city. The success of community efforts encouraging property acquisition was so great that the Bureau of Negro Welfare and Statistics felt no need to promote the establishment of building and loan associations, such as those found in Beckley and Charleston. Moreover, of the 483 black owned homes, the average number of rooms per house was 5.5 and the average number of persons per household was 3.9, 1.2 less than the city average. In 1926, then Pittsburgh Courier reporter George S. Schuyler reiterated the positive portrait of black Huntington’s progress, writing, “Over sixty per cent of the colored families own the houses in which they live;
most of the Negroes have steady work on the railroad or in the big shops of the
Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad; many work steadily for the municipality,
collecting garbage and trash, and there are close to 50 barbers who don’t appear to
be clasping the lean hand of want. Moreover, the relations between whites and
Negroes are very cordial and Negro businesses can always count upon the
patronage of whites in West Virginia, no matter how strong the spirit of the Ku
Klux Klan may be otherwise.”115 Yet, given their broad success, restrictive
covenants prevented Afro-Huntingtonians from exercising the full measure of
their citizenship: the right to live where they wanted.

Arguably the most significant decision rendered by the West Virginia State
Supreme Court during the first third of the twentieth century was one striking
down restrictive covenants in the state. In the only case of its type on record
within the state, Afro-Huntingtonians initiated a legal challenge to restrictions
designed to exclude them from desirable residential locations. Unlike the previous
efforts by white realtors to restrain black residential settlement, the outgrowth of
the 1929 victory in White v. White was in response to an attempt by Kate Rau and
Anna E. Jones, white owners of a tract of land, to insert in a deed a provision that
the property involved “should not be conveyed to or demised to Ethiopians in the
city of Huntington.” In 1920 Rau and Jones divided their land into eleven lots.
Despite the deed stipulation, in 1926 black residents Lewis and Cora White
purchased one of the lots, drawing the ire of H. B. White, the owner of six other
lots in the subdivision. In an effort to restrict the Whites from occupying the
premises based on the deed restriction, White initiated a legal challenge in circuit
court. The case pivoted on “the right of a person selling property to prohibit the further sale of the property by its owner to persons of color.”116

The challenge and eventual victory of Lewis and Cora White directly stem from the strategizing and financial support of local black citizens. After losing in the Cabell County Circuit Court which upheld the contention of H. B. White, and declared the deed granting the property to the White’s null and void, the Whites were served shortly thereafter with a notice to vacate the property. The challenge might have stopped there if not for the efforts of the Huntington branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Speaking on these efforts Walter Myers relays,

[T]he white man didn’t want a black man to move near him. The white man was named ‘White’, and the black man was named ‘White’. And so, it was, it was a bitter-fought case. We hired a constitutional lawyer. That was the year I joined the NAACP. The NAACP was just starting up. It wasn’t, we had the Urban League. But that would, that didn’t, that wasn’t their criteria. It was…they told us to join the NAACP, which we did. And we got a charter. And so they took over and we got a constitutional lawyer.117

Led by H. D. Hazelwood, then principal of Douglass High and president of the Huntington branch of the NAACP, the executive committee invited Charleston attorney and State President of the NAACP, T. G. Nutter, to a public forum to discuss the next step. At least one local black attendee was aware of the potential enormity of the case to the aspirations of the state’s black citizens. Myers recalls that Dave Medison called for the case to be argued before the state Supreme Court. “Don’t fight it here. If you win here, you’d be just for
Huntington. This thing has got to go for the whole entire state… [If we win] no white person couldn’t say that you couldn’t live by them.” With the financial backing of the Huntington branch and the assistance of black Huntington attorney A.D. Meadows (who had argued the case in the lower court), Nutter appealed the decision to the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia. Utilizing a five pronged argument, which included provisions asserting that the Whites were Negro and not Ethiopian, and the inconsistency of the covenant with the right of full ownership, Nutter and his colleagues argued their appeal. Of course, the court largely ignored the first contention, and instead, based its 24-page reversal upon the major point contained within the second: “Any conditional restriction which completely destroys the right of the property owner to dispose of his property in any way that he desires has always been held void by all courts as inconsistent with the rights of full ownership.” The decision, hailed by the national branch of the NAACP as the “most significant since the Louisville Segregation Case” of 1917, established a legal precedent protecting the state’s Negroes from restrictive covenants, insofar as residence is involved, when such covenant is a part of a deed or paper denoting ownership.

In the mission to “spread their wings,” and take care of their own, evidence indicates that black Huntingtonians accepted the consequences of life in a segregated, constraining environment as long as economic opportunity remained manifest. Yet, the impediments to their progress were formidable and adaptive. The city’s rapid growth, black population increase, development of black institutions, and growing black residential concentration prompted an
intensification of Jim Crowism that constrained the aspirations of Afro-
Huntingtonians. By 1930, Huntington’s increasing importance as a transshipment
point for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, vital river port, and growing
manufacturing center, made it West Virginia’s most populous city with 75,752
residents. Huntington’s African American population growth paralleled this
increase, comprising by 1930 the second largest conglomeration in the state at
4,630 residents. In large measure, white Huntingtonians embraced the same
racialized attitudes and mechanisms operative throughout the Deep South.
Though lacking the brutality and totality of race subjugation in the Deep South
(for instance, West Virginia possessed no Jim Crow law), West Virginia’s state
mandated system of “benevolent segregation” and prevailing notions of white
superiority coalesced to form an effective bulwark, the most potent manifestation
being the implementation of restrictive covenants.

Afro-Huntingtonians used a variety of oppositional strategies to assert their
rights and self-worth, with education, increasing entry into public space, and
property acquisition the most far-reaching. Relying upon the ideological pillars of
religion, education, industry, and thrift, the city’s black middle-class residents,
like their contemporaries across the nation during the late-nineteenth and early
twentieth century, embodied and benefited from the “Self-Help” philosophy. In
the process Afro-Huntingtonians turned segregation into what historian Earl
Lewis labeled “congregation.” Congregation, Lewis observes “symbolized an act
of free will, whereas segregation represented the imposition of another’s will….
[African Americans] discovered, however, that congregation in a Jim Crow

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environment produced more space than power. They used this space to gather their cultural bearings, to mold the urban setting.”  

In Huntington, as across America, African American economic and political progress during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century resulted in racial advancement and social stratification, thus, confounding and complicating the quest to forge community. Symbolic of the “communities within communities” that existed within the city and area, black Huntington represented separate, competing and overlapping visions of American life, one articulated by the city’s whites, the other largely embraced by its black citizens. Yet the metamorphosis of black Huntington is noteworthy for the level of cultural, social and economic maturity achieved attendant to life within the crucible of Jim Crow. Drawn to the city’s economic vitality, burgeoning black institutions, and expanding cultural offerings, a new generation of black residents arrived to acquire education, establish socio-cultural ties and linkages, and garner professional opportunities. The strategies implemented by a new generation of black residents helped move them and the race forward.


3 Ibid.


5 Addressing the rationale for increasing racial antipathy towards black aspirations, Leon Litwack notes of white southerners of the era, “Between 1890 and World War I, white Southerners went to extraordinary lengths to mythologize the past, to fantasize an Old South, a Civil War, a Reconstruction, and a Negro that conformed to the images they preferred to cherish, images that both comforted and reassured them. They wanted to remind themselves of black loyalty and service in the past, to honor ‘the old slavery-time Negro,’ the unemancipated, unreconstructed Sambos, with their ‘dignified humility’ and ‘unfailing devotion to duty,’ who remained committed to the lessons and traits they had acquired as slaves.” See Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1998), 185.


7 Table shows that although black population grew in absolute numbers, it declined proportionally to the white population.


11 *The Huntington Advertiser*, September 14, 1904.

12 *Logan County Banner* (West Virginia), June 12, 1897.

Charleston Daily Mail, March 13, 1898. Noteworthy is black response to the lynching. Within five years, Bramwell pastor R. H. McKoy had established the headquarters of the Golden Rule Association, “one of the most energetic of the prewar black fraternal orders. Within one decade the organization celebrated its success: fifty-four subordinate lodges, twenty-six nurseries serving young people aged three to sixteen, more than 5,280 members, and more than thirteen thousand paid out in sick and death benefits.” See Trotter, “The Formation of Black Community in Southern West Virginia Coalfields,” 289-90.  
Ancella Bickley Livers, “The Greenbrier Lynching: A Study of West Virginia Justice,” (n.p., 1993) Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 1. Livers’ (now Bickley) acknowledges some discrepancy on exact numbers in her three sources stemming from difficulty in the definition of lynching. As she states, “while most definitions seem to agree that lynchings are the result of mob action, the definitions do not always agree on how many people constitute a mob.” One source recounts, “54 lynchings between 1882 and 1927. Of these lynchings 21 had been of whites, 33 of blacks.” A second states “from 1882 to 1968…48 lynchings in the state, 20 white, 28 black.” A third, chronicling 1889 to 1918, provides “28 different lynchings.” See Walter White, Rope & Faggot; A Biography of Judge Lynch (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), 235; Robert L. Zangrando, The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 5; and Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918 (NAACP, April 1919), 102.  
Ibid., 1, 3. The first was introduced by Fayette County delegate John V. Coleman in 1919. The second by McDowell County delegate Harry J. Capehart in 1921. The bill was eventually passed in 1921 as the Capehart Anti-Lynching Law, but with a reduced restitution penalty of $20,000, down from the $25,000 stipulated in the original bill. Some evidence of the law’s effectiveness can be found in The Pittsburgh Courier, which cited the state as one with no record of lynching within the past 5 years, see The Pittsburg Courier, 3 April 1926.  
Johnson, “How Much is Migration a Flight from Persecution,” 274. Specifically, Johnson sought to refute the idea that black migrant influx was the result of a fearful, impotent populace that lacked intelligence and rational thought to recognize the benefits of economic opportunity.  
Some discrepancy exists in the identity of the first executed, although the exact native origins of both are cited as unknown. Stan Bumgardner and Christine Kreiser identify the first two as McDowell County residents Shep Caldwell, convicted of murdering his mistress, and Frank Broadnax, also convicted of murder. See Stan Bumgardner and Christine Kreiser, “Thy Brother’s Blood: Capital Punishment in West Virginia,” West Virginia Historical Society Quarterly, Volume IX, No. 4 and Volume X, No. 1, March 1996, www.wvculture.org/history/wvhs941.html (accessed June 1, 2005). M. Watt Espy and John Ortiz Smykla list Fayette County resident Henry Jenkins and Raleigh County resident William Martin as the first two. Both were convicted of murder and listed with unknown origins. Caldwell and Broadnax are listed as the 10th and 11th state executions. See M. Watt Espy and John Ortiz Smykla, Executions in the United States, 1608-1987: The Espy File, Volume 3, (ICPSR 8451), West Virginia, First ICPSR Edition, Fall 1987, Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research, Ann Arbor, Michigan (State Library of Ohio, Columbus, OH), 1337-1347. Part of the discrepancy may derive from the fact that West Virginia mandated state-sponsored executions in 1899, while Espy and Smykla initiate their listing from 1881. Regarding McDowell County, Trotter reports, “During the period from 1899 to 1928, ten African Americans from McDowell County were hanged by the state compared to only two whites from that county.” See Trotter, Coal, Class, and Color, 24.  
“Victim of Negro’s Hatred dies from Awful Wounds,” Huntington Herald Dispatch, August 28, 1910, and “Exciting Scenes Sunday Night,” and “Another Attempt to Lynch Negroes Thwarted; Many Arrests are Made for Inciting Riot,” Huntington Herald Dispatch, August 29, 1910. The
fact that Huntington city authorities succeeding in stopping the lynching reveals the differing perspectives maintained by white authorities attempting to uphold the law against those of white residents seeking extra-legal measures to subvert it.


24 A 1902 article in The Huntington Advertiser relays, “Milton is probably the only town of its size in this section of the state where there is not a single negro. For a long time the people of the town and neighborhood have been opposed to a negro population and they have always found a way to get rid of any colored man who is so bold as to venture into the town. John Banks was for a long time the only negro in Milton. He had lived there all his life and was well liked by everybody. On that account an exception was made in his favor and he was allowed to abide in [peace], but now he has moved to this city and Milton is left without a single negro.” The Huntington Advertiser, 26 December 1902. One of Loewen’s more salient points is that a town need not be void of black residents to be considered a sundown town. Many whites, in fact, tolerated long time black residents or those individuals or families considered non-threatening to the status quo. Elaborating upon Charles S. Johnson’s findings, Loewen contends the greatest acts of violence were perpetuated not against the long-time resident but against the black migrant most recently arrived.


28 Labor agencies and the press regularly recruited African Americans from outside the state. In one 1907 issue of The Advocate, an African American Charleston-based newspaper, a full-page advertisement appeared with the following headline: “Opportunity—opportunity—2,000 colored men with or without families wanted for permanent employment and residence in West Virginia.” The accompanying article displayed the advantages and virtues offered by the state. “In West Virginia there is no discrimination in the public school laws…colored teachers are paid the same salaries as white teachers. Men wanted as miners … from $2.00 to $5.00 per day can be earned. It takes only a few weeks for a man to learn the trade of mining.” Indicative of state government support for the recruitment of African Americans was the signing of the statement by J. M. Hazelwood, mayor of Charleston, with West Virginia Governor W. M. Dawson, given as reference. Charles P. Anson, “A History of the Labor Movement in West Virginia,” (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 1940), 66-7. Anson cites 18 April, 1907, issue of The Advocate.


30 In Gallipolis, Ohio, during the early-1900s a number of black women engaged in “trading secrets” gained from the gossip gathered while working in the homes of white families. Information gained was shared with other black women involved in church work, Lincoln School (the city’s black high school), in women’s clubs, and even in political organizations like the African-American League formed in the city in 1903. After one heard of a secret plan by the city’s councilmen to divide up the Third Ward where most blacks lived, thereby weakening black influence in municipal politics, the women spread word of the plan preventing its implementation. “Black Women Pioneers in Gallia County Work Force,” James Sands, Sunday Times Sentinel (Gallipolis, OH), February 14, 1993.

31 Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 185-229. This belief was encapsulated by an article published in the African American newspaper The Durham Reformer (North Carolina), and reprinted in The Pittsburgh Courier, which stated, “A race is no better than its women. The progress that colored women are making in morality and feminine attractiveness is truly remarkable. When the history of the race is considered along with the unrestricted assaults, which the law permitted and public opinion sanctioned, upon the chastity of our women, one cannot but be struck by the wonderful efforts which are being put forth to counteract the ingrained traditions of centuries.” See “Afro-American Cullings,” The Pittsburgh Courier, July 25, 1912.


39 Ibid. March 6, 1910.

40 Ibid. June 30, 1910.

Before the Depression cut short the golden years of the Harlem Renaissance, Hughes performed in New York theaters and movie-houses, as well as on the radio. In 1932, she returned to Huntington to care for her widowed mother in her last illness, and eventually secured the position as supervisor of public school music in Cabell County’s segregated schools. After creating the Douglass High School band she led her young musicians out into the community, where they performed at major civic events and for white civic groups. After placing first in the West Virginia High School Music Contest (Negro) for three consecutive years, her high school musicians won a permanent trophy. Remarkably, in less than ten years, Hughes had transformed a non-existent music program into one of state-wide recognition. She also found time to complete a master’s degree in music at Northwestern. Before retiring in 1955, Hughes had traveled around the globe, from Broadway to Huntington to the Middle East, performing a variety of musical genres from classical to jazz, garnering worldwide accolades, awards, and fans, and uplifting the race through multiple endeavors, including starting an award-winning musical program at Douglass. After a twenty-five hiatus, Hughes would be “re-discovered” by a new generation of fans. Throughout the early 1980s, she experienced career resurgence and performed at a number of venues nation-wide including an appearance at New York City’s Radio City Music Hall. In 1987, Hughes passed at the age of ninety-one and was posthumously inducted into the Huntington Wall of Fame the following year. For composite history see, In Memory, Mortgage Burning Program, April 23-29, 1945, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and Community Center, program in possession of author; “Afro-American Notes,” Huntington Herald-Dispatch; Revella E. Hughes Papers, 1895-1984, Special Collections, James E. Morrow Library, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, ii; “Eva Roberta Coles Booth,” Dr. Raymond Pierre Hylton, Virginia Union University, [data online], accessed January 22, 2008, available at http://www.vuu.edu/alumni/EvaRobertaColesBoone.htm. Site lists 1883 as the school’s first year of operation; “Virginia Union University,” The History of Jim Crow, Teacher Resources, [data online], accessed January 22, 2008, available at http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/scripts/jimcrow/glossary.cgi?term=v&letter=yes. In 1932, Virginia Union University absorbed Hartshorn; Carrie Simmons, “Afro-American Cullings,” The Pittsburg Courier, July 7, 1911, August 12, 1911, and September 9, 1911. “Took the Exam,” Huntington Advertiser, July 23, 1904. Nelson L Barnett, Jr. “A Short History of Seven Generation of Barnettts,” Honoring our Past: Proceedings of the First Two Conferences on West Virginia’s Black History, eds. Joe William Turner and Ancella Radford Bickley (n.p., 1991), 326, State Archives and History Library, Charleston, WV. “Chiseled Words Hold Special Place,” James McMiller, Huntington Herald-Dispatch, July 2, 1978. Recalling her graduation at the age of 88, Francisco recalls, “There were four in my class. The graduation took place in the Huntington Theatre and at that time the girls had a dress for baccalaureate, one for the graduation, and one for the reception that followed.” See Plantania, “Getting Ready for Life,” 23. “Increased Attendance at the School,” Huntington Advertiser, September 18, 1903. Employment figures relayed by Nelson L. Barnett, Jr. Barnett’s first post-graduate job took him to Clarksburg, West Virginia, where he taught manual training at a segregated high school. Soon bored with Clarksburg, he returned to Ohio to become the manual arts teacher at Wilberforce College. Shortly afterwards, he married and two years later, he and his new bride, Carrie, settled in Charleston, where he taught shop at the Garnet High School. Notably, while residing in Charleston, Barnett met Reverend Modecah Johnson, a local minister and eventual president of Howard University. “By this time,” Barnett reveals, “I had begun to think in terms of our people.” Strat Douthat, “Son Had to Live in White Society’s Shadow,” The Herald-Dispatch (Huntington), March 13, 1977. After the Depression, Barnett settled into Huntington and began teaching manual training at Douglass. “Callie Left Sons, Cried all the Way Home,” The Herald-Dispatch (Huntington), March 13, 1977. The Douglass High School Reunion, 1973, Souvenir Program Book (Huntington, W.Va: Franklin Printing Co., 1973) , 34, 47, program in possession of author. The Huntington Dispatch, November 28, 1906, December 12, 1906, and March 30, 1907 editions. For more on Tillman, see Litwack, Trouble in Mind, 189, 206, and 227.
“Negroes Would Stop Tillman’s Lecture Here,” Huntington Advertiser, March 27, 1907. The five points are as follows: “First. If the colored people of Huntington need a scathing rebuke, such as we shall expect Senator Tillman to administer indiscriminately, where is the necessity of the chastisement? Second. Since the races are living here peaceably and practicable, from whence arises the necessity of stirring up strife and dissention, to take the place of order, peace, and harmony? Third. What beneficial results is the doctrine, as preached by this apostle of race prejudice expected to bring to the college or the community? Fourth. If in the course of Senator Tillman’s remarks, he insists upon the right to become not only inflammatory, but profane in the extreme, regardless of the moral tone of the refined tastes of those who have been taught from the knee of maternity that ‘roughness is akin to rudeness’ and smoothness is the distinctive badge of scholarly culture and gentlemanly refinement, is there in this procedure somewhere a hidden spring leading to virtuous fountains or a righteousness that exalts a nation? If so, please inform us where. Fifth. Since we are a little chagrined and considerably surprised at the sudden flashing among us, a man who stirs up race strife wherever he goes, a man who, upon the floor of the United States senate justified, the violation of the same law he solemnly swore he would uphold and defend, a man, who, when interrogated during his scathing denunciations of a helpless race a few days ago in Chicago, as to the law fearing upon that point replied in language, which must be indicated in print by a (dash), we hope you will be generous enough to concede that our inquiries are not entirely without some foundation.”.


Prof. J. W. Scott, Progress of the Huntington Negro, 4.

Gaines, Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century, 1-3.


For example, “Colored Folks,” Huntington Dispatch, March 10, 1907, and “Afro-American Notes,” Herald-Dispatch Sunday (Huntington), May 23, 1909 and May 30, 1909.


See “Afro-American Cullings,” The Pittsburgh Courier, 1911 and 1912 editions.

Ibid. October 15, 1904. Of the nearly 100 listings provided, the only African American cited is C.H. Barnett, listed as constructing a two story frame dwelling at 810 Seventh Avenue.


For a history of the establishment of the black church in Huntington, see Fain, “The Forging of a Black Community,” 45-7 and 72-76.


Housel, “Side by Side.” Housel reports that Fuller purchased 22 lots between 1910 and 1910, with a number of them sold in a “quick turnaround sale.”

Jane Wilkins, Sarah Wilkins, T.W. Wilkins, Florence L. Williams, Alex Winston, Belle C. Winston and G. W. Winston. Providing evidence of the abiding ties among area religious leaders, the council meeting to establish the church included Dr. R. J. Perkins, president and found of West Virginia Seminary and College; Rev. D. W. Meadows, State Missionary; Rev. Nelson Barnett, pastor Second Baptist Church, Guyandotte; Rev. S. E. Williams, pastor of Baptist Church, Ashland, Ky.; Deacon T. R. Botts, Burlington, and a representative of the Fourth Street Baptist Church, Ironton, Ohio. See “Church History,” In Memory, Mortgage Burning Program, April 23-29, 1945, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church and Community Center, program in possession of author. By 1936, a church document maintains that the church “located in the heart of the Negro population in Huntington, is the largest church in the state” with a total membership exceeding 1,200 members. See The Annual Great Harvest Home Program, Sixteenth St. Baptist Church and Community Center, October 19-30, 1936, program in possession of author.

68 Housel, “Side by Side.”
69 The Huntington Advertiser, April 29, 1903.
71 The Huntington Advertiser, April 6, 1905
72 Housel, “The Construction of a ‘colored’ Neighborhood.” For information pertaining to Cammock, see pg. 10. For quote, see pg. 9. Of the fifteen residents of Washington Place in 1910, thirteen were laborers. See Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910.
73 Duckworth, personal recollection; Cabell County Deed Book 97:7; and Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910.
74 Thirteenth Census of the United States, 1910, 178-180.
75 Ibid., 246.
76 Record of Proceedings of Council, City of Huntington, WV, 1898-1901, January 17, 1898, 9.
78 Suggestion of such a problem is derived from proposed city council ordinance banning minors loafing in saloons. See Record of Proceedings of Council, City of Huntington, WV, 1901-1905, June 6, 1904, 360.
80 Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900.
81 The Huntington Advertiser, June 18, 1904.
82 Scott, Progress of the Huntington Negro, 5, 9. Monograph obtained from Edna Duckworth collection, now in possession of author. This amount is in line with the 1909 valuation of $300,000 in Negro property. See “Afro-American Notes,” Huntington Herald-Dispatch, February 21, 1909.
84 Grantee Index to Deeds, No. 1, Ba-Bl, From 1808 to Dec. 31, 1922, 16; and Cabell County Deed Book No. 111, Cabell County, 487.
86 Chas. A. Wilson, “An Early Settler Looking Backward” (n.p. 1925), 129.
87 See Grantee Index to Deeds, No. 1, A, From 1808 to Dec. 31, 1922, 10, and Deed Book 108, Cabell County, 545-550
88 “Afro-American Cullings,” Carrie Simmons, The Pittsburgh Courier, June 8, 1911.

“Colored Ward Added to City Hospital,” *The Huntington Herald-Dispatch*, March 27, 1909.

“Negro Died from Neglect,” Ibid., August 10, 1909.


*Socialist and Labor Star* (Huntington), August 28, 1914. Noteworthy is electoral support for Socialist Party presidential candidates from 1904 to 1920, which peaks in 1912 with voter support in the state achieving 5.7 percent, more than any other electoral year. See Fred Barkey, “The Socialist Party in West Virginia from 1891 to 1920: A Study in Working Class Radicalism” (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1971), West Virginia State Archives, Charleston, WV. The original name of the paper was *The Socialist and Labor Star*. In April 1914, the name was changed to *The Labor Star*.

Ibid. October 16, 1914.


*Socialist and Labor Star*. May 22, 1914. KYOWVA Genealogical Society cites the following employment numbers: Chesapeake and Ohio Ry. Shops and cars, 2200 employees; Chesapeake and Ohio Ry. Trainmen and division men, 500; and American Car and Foundry Co. freight cars, 1500. See “Employment Figures,” KYOWVA Genealogical Society, Vol. XXIV, No. 2 (Summer 2001), 13.

Ibid. September 4, 1914.

Ibid. October 9, 1914.


Scott, *Progress of the Huntington Negro*, 10


*Grantee Index to Deeds, No. 1, Ma-M & Mc, From 1808 to Dec. 31, 1922*, 14c, 14d.


Ibid.


Ibid., 15. As Housel relays, “Contiguous with these developments was the continuing differentiation of the city’s black residents socially, economically, politically, and spatially. As Huntington thrived, subdivisions developed outside of the city. And just like those white realtors who had previously sought rewards on their investment within the city’s core, land speculators once again envisioned profits through the commodification of space. Similar to factories, subdivisions were created to maximize profit through a new organization of space. In order to increase value and marketability of the land, developers targeted a specific group of buyers
promoting the purchase as an ‘investment’ in the future. This view of home as an investment represents the shift in how housing was viewed. In this new view, housing is seen in terms of its exchange value (market value), not its use value. Once the house is commodified factors that might affect its value become of primary importance to investors—land speculators, real estate agent, investors, and homeowners. It did not take long to realize that a key factor in assessing value was adjacent properties. Consequently, controlling adjacent properties became important in maintaining value. Thus, the developed area is seen in total, not as individual parcels. This commodification of housing ensured the development of housing tracts marketed to a homogenous population of households of similar class and race that would be perceived as a safe, long-term investment.”

111 In American Apartheid, Douglass Massey and Nancy Denton emphasize the importance of examining the structure of segregation stating, “Residential segregation is the institutional apparatus that supports other racially discriminatory processes and binds them together into a coherent and unique and uniquely effective system of racial subordination.” Douglass Massey and Nancy A. Denton, American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1993), 8.


113 “Colored Men form Realty Company,” Huntington Herald Dispatch, March 22, 1920. Dr. C.C. Barnett was the other member of the firm Brown & Barnett. In 1921, thirty-three black businesses existed in Huntington, including the following: nine contractors, six barbers, five hair dressing shops, three real estate firms, three pressing and cleaning shops, two shoe repairing shops, two printing companies, one hospital, one drug store, and one moving picture house. See Huntington, West Virginia, City Directory, 1921, The 1920-2005 Directories (Livonia, MI: Polk Publishing Co., 1919-2004).


115 George S. Schuyler, “Huntington, W.Va.: Close to Kentucky,” The Pittsburgh Courier, February 13, 1926. Schuyler’s acknowledgement of the vitality of the Ku Klux Klan in the area helps illuminate the nature of response by some whites to continuing black progress. Additional insight on the reemergence of the KKK in the region is underlined by the fact that five years earlier, then Huntington newspaper man, A. N. Johnson, called at city to protest the attempts by the organization to establish a Huntington branch, stating that “every colored man, woman child in Huntington would resent organization of any society that would be known by the name of Ku Klux Klan” and that “that hideous name strikes terror to the heart of every negro.” See “Negroes Protest Against Ku Klux,” Huntington Herald-Dispatch, May 27, 1921.


117 Walter and Ida Myers, interviewed by Jackie Fourie, 8.

118 Ibid., 9.


United States, 1910 (Washington, D.C.: GPO); Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920
(Washington, D.C.: GPO); and Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930 (Washington, D.C.: GPO). 1930 population includes 72612 in Cabell County and 2960 in Wayne (Westmoreland district) County. Part of Ceredo annexed to Huntington city, Cabell County, in 1923, and part (including that part annexed to Huntington city) taken to form Westmoreland district in 1924.

CONCLUSION

On a pristine Saturday in early May 2009, I drove to Indianapolis, Indiana, to attend the 50th birthday party of Billy, a life-long friend of mine. Among the other party-goers that night were other life-long friends of differing lengths, including one, whose association with me dates back to serving on the safety patrol in grade school. The next afternoon, five of us gathered on the back deck of Billy’s house and reminisced about growing up in Huntington. Over the next few hours, we ate party leftovers, drank beer, and warmly (and not infrequently, loudly) discussed, laughed, needled, lamented, and commemorated our experiences in black Huntington. Through the rose-tinted glasses of nostalgia, we remembered baskets made, footballs caught, girls courted (and lost), front-porch visits, stupid-things done, church trips made, and friends and family who have passed on. Interestingly, to a man, we recalled our formative years in the city fondly, with one stating, “I wouldn’t have traded it for anything.” It occurred to me then, that for many of them, the years in Huntington had been the best years of our lives.

Unlike so many, to us, community was no notion, it was a foundational force in our lives, demonstrated in the intergenerational, inter-class alliances and
associations linking and binding us. It existed in the lives and deeds of African American teachers, postal workers, lawyers, factory laborers, preachers, and parishioners, hustlers and “players,” who shaped our lives in subtle and explicit ways. Certainly, this ethos extends and compels many black Huntingtonians to return to the Douglass High School Black Alumni Reunion, which, since 1973, has been held every two years in the city. Yet, as more and more Douglassites die the abiding intergenerational ties and enduring collective impulse linking black Huntingtonians wanes. In response to this reality and in an effort to reconfigure the social connections, a combined Douglass-Huntington High School Black Alumni Reunion was held for the first time in August 2009.1

At one point during the course of the afternoon I stepped into the kitchen and began chatting with Billy’s father, a long-time Huntingtonian, and, for the first time during our acquaintanceship, with Billy’s wife. It was a warm, intimate conversation, flavored with abiding affection for the elder, who worked long-hours for many years in Huntington’s factory economy, to raise his family, and genuine interest in getting to know Billy’s long-time partner, spouse, and mother of their three children. While filling my plate with the left-over chicken, greens, and dirty rice, and probing as historians do, I discovered, to my great surprise and delight that she is the daughter of Susan Spencer, and thus a descendant of the “Burlington 37,” the pioneering group of black migrants who settled into Burlington, Ohio, in 1849, across the river from Huntington, and many of whom would shape black Huntington’s metamorphosis. What a delicious revelation, I thought!
Driving down I-70 to Columbus Sunday evening, radio off and window down, I savored the profundity of the day’s event, of the synchronicity between my (our) personal history and my professional interests. Though bemused (and a little dismayed) over my inability to retain the same level of recall of the people and places informing the old neighborhood and community as my friends, the trip had been gratifying, nourishing, and edifying. It had afforded another opportunity to discover, through the communion with life-long friends, the richness and uniqueness of our black experience in Huntington. Like the Ohio River, the visit had allowed the currents of the past, present, and future, to wash over me. It also reaffirmed to me the importance of asking questions.

It was an impulse that compelled me to ask, why hasn’t anyone done a scholarly study on black Huntington? Here, I thought, was a story waiting to be told! Why, given the history, vibrancy, and resonance of the experience, given the stories I’ve heard, the names spoken of, the faces remembered, and the experiences recounted, had no one gathered the various threads and patches of fabric to construct the quilt of historic memory? Some years later, I asked a similar question to Mrs. Edna Duckworth, the last of the community historians, as we sat in her small senior-citizen apartment. Her response was to hand me a short, unpublished manuscript entitled, “A Black History of Huntington.” I departed her company with a conviction to build upon her research. With equal parts pride, impulsivity, and naivety, I started the process to put to pen to paper, flesh to bone, so to speak. Its culmination is this study. Needless to say, attempting to separate
myth from reality and reconcile sentiment with evidence wasn’t an easy process, but it has been a deeply satisfying one.

The story of black Huntington is a story of agency. From its formation as the transshipment hub of the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad, Huntington experienced remarkable growth between 1871 and 1930. Drawn by the promise of jobs, opportunity, and self-determination, hundreds, then thousands flowed into the burgeoning village. Huntington’s development proved a magnet for black migrants seeking jobs, improved housing, and social linkages. Looking for alternatives to share-cropping, tenant farming, and patronage, and utilizing kin and social networks black migrants traveled long distances, not infrequently, hundreds of miles over the central Appalachian Mountains to reach the town. There, they navigated an even harsher terrain: the forces of segregation, racism, industrialization, and urbanization. The genesis of the black Huntington’s working class was a complicated and contested process encompassing differing oppositional strategies that produced varying degrees and interpretations of success. Lacking formal education, job mobility, and political representation, the first generation of black migrants faced formidable impediments and challenges to the achievement of its aspirations. Yet, Huntington also offered liberating forces—a racial climate infused with tolerance, if not respect, proximity and socio-cultural connections to historic black enclaves, gainful employment opportunities, vibrant black institutions, the ability to purchase property, the potential of political action, and other benefits of urban circumstance—each playing a role in ensuring the black southern migrant remained. In contrast to the
suffocating repression of the post-Reconstruction south, black Huntington offered space and place within which existed a range of possibilities that would produce significant changes to the status quo by 1930.

The intricacies and contradictions emergent in Afro-Huntingtonians’ strivings provide insights into the complicated landscape of urban-industrial life. While rising affluence benefited many, contributing to growing numbers of educated citizens, financially stable households, and the development of black institutions, others, unable to avail themselves of the opportunities and resources of their more stable brethren (or disdaining of them), experienced protracted economic difficulties. Many remained more vulnerable to impoverished surroundings, crime, and violence. Though each espoused differing and competing ideas of equality Huntington’s black working class and emergent middle class remained conjoined under the rubric of de facto segregation. The discrete, divergent, and intertwining nature of their lives and the responses to the ambiguity, fragility, and commonality of their circumstance illuminate the rationality of their world-view and help refute the notion of black pathology. In conjunction and related to this development, important black institutions relocated to the periphery of embryonic black neighborhoods, shaping black migrant resettlement patterns and eventually forming the core of an increasing concentration of black residents. While segregation, racism, discrimination, geography, and history compelled some commonality of circumstance amongst all Afro-Huntingtonians, economic stratification, social and cultural diversity, and
varied aspirations and lifestyles complicated the quest for community. It is this variety that informed, energized, and defined black Huntington.

The formation of an articulate, competent, and educated professional class in the 1890s encompassed a shift in the development of black Huntington away from the historical predominance of the black worker. It marked the beginning of the second generation of black Huntingtonians whose increasing initiative, affluence, and influence challenged preconceived threats to their well-being, and whose resources offered better competencies to address the barriers before them. Huntington’s black middle class, like their brethren nationwide, embraced the tenets of “Self-Help” and “Racial Uplift” to combat the myriad manifestations of racism, and to elevate Afro-Huntingtonians’ individual and collective self-worth. In the process, they distanced themselves from Huntington’s black working class. Thus, racial advancement and social stratification progressed in concert.

Still, black Huntington’s accomplishments are impressive and important. Black labor helped build the city and make it prosperous. Their labor also helped initiate the industrialization of southern West Virginia and link the town to regional and national markets, helping fuel impressive economic and population growth in it throughout the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Within months of settlement, illiterate black migrants initiated the foundational process of institution building necessary for the formation of black Huntington, a process that continues to shape, albeit in a different and diminished manner, contemporary black Huntington. From the humble beginnings of Mt. Olive Baptist Church, situated in a log cabin, to the eventual establishment of Douglass High School, the
city’s first black high school, Huntington’s black residents agitated for change. Their story contributes to literature refuting the notion that the era encompassed “the nadir of America race relations,” as black Huntingtonians increasingly carved out spaces of autonomy and authority. Property acquisition was one avenue utilized. Throughout the Jim Crow era, savvy and ambitious black residents acquired property, so much so, that by 1924, Afro-Huntingtonians owned a higher percentage of property than any other black residential population in the state. Further, in the quest to live where they wanted, Black Huntingtonians initiated the 1929 legal challenge to restrictive covenants within the city. The victory in *White vs. White* struck down the legality of such restrictions throughout the State. In truth, black Huntingtonians shaped greater Huntington’s economic, political, social, and cultural development.

Forced to respond to the diverse strivings and successes of Afro-Huntingtonians, white Huntingtonians embraced the tenets and manifestation of Jim Crowism, as ways to constrict and constrain black agency and autonomy. Yet, evidence indicates that black Huntingtonians abided rather than succumbed to life in a segregated, constraining environment. Their victories may have been small but they were not inconsequential. In this manner, their story articulates and embodies the American ideal. Though compromised by southern ideologies, attitudes, and practices of race, black Huntington’s progression suggests a distinctiveness that is not merely regional but national in scope. Examination of Afro-Huntingtonians’ struggles provides insights into the multi-faceted and nuanced character of African American resistance during the late-nineteenth and
early-twentieth century, offering opportunities to interrogate the complicated operations of race, class, and gender within the fluid dynamics of social and power relationships.

Like many other northern urban-industrial cities that are struggling to adapt to the decline of its manufacturing and industrial base and the shift to a service-oriented economy, Huntington is now grappling with out-migration, a deteriorating tax-base, an aging population, rising drug abuse and crime and, swaths of vacant and abandoned properties. In 2005, for the first time in more than eighty-five years, Huntington lost its designation as a city and officially became a town. From a peak of 85,000 in 1970, Huntington’s total population is now less than 50,000. While the forces of economic change have buffeted all of the town’s residents, the shift has been especially traumatic and long-lasting for Afro-Huntingtonians. Historically concentrated in the working-class occupations found within and affiliated with Huntington’s industrial and manufacturing sector, jobs that offered middle-class wages and benefits without the need for a college degree, many Afro-Huntingtonians were ill-prepared for the structural change attendant to the globalization of the factory system and were forced to move on and out. This multi-generational exodus has resulted in a dispersion of Huntington’s black population and its socio-cultural and political presence. Largely bereft of the strength relayed through the foundational aspects of community formation—residential concentration, vigorous black institutions, and natural increase, economically stable, multi-generational families’ espousing collective aspirations, black Huntington is floundering. In recent years, historical
black institutions, including Douglass High School, Barnett School, J. W. Scott Community Center, and Barnett Child Care Center have either closed or been demolished. Currently, the Cabell County Board of Education is contemplating the demolition of the Colored Orphans Home to make way for a new middle school.

Unfortunately, the story of the demise of black Huntington is not unique. Sadly, historically vibrant and resilient black enclaves have experienced decline across West Virginia, Central Appalachia, and America. The profundity of this lost cannot be overstated. Thus, this study of black Huntington serves as a corrective to this troubling trend. This study reminds that across America, stories remain to be told. It is my hope that this examination, with all its deficiencies, will compel others to unearth the rich, hidden veins of the African American experience within the region. For instance, although studies have examined discrete and overlapping elements of the black experience in Kanawha County—i.e., black labor in the salt mines, community development in southern West Virginia, or the life of Booker T. Washington—a comprehensive historical study of the black experience in Charleston, Virginia/West Virginia, has yet to be done. A comparative examination of the civil rights era within the historical black enclaves located in the Tri-state area of southeastern Ohio, eastern Kentucky, and southwestern West Virginia--Gallipolis and Ironton, Ohio, Ashland, Kentucky, and Huntington—of the Ohio River Valley, or between the primary southern West Virginia black urban industrial centers of Beckley, Bluefield, Charleston, and Huntington, is also called for. The burgeoning literature on identity politics offers
a number of potential studies. The historical presence of diverse native groups and
the intermingling of ethnicities, slavery, the rise of melungeon studies, and the
fact that West Virginia did not adopt racial integrity measures as done in adjacent
states compels examination of the intersections of race, class, gender, and power
and the fluidity of racial identity and politics. For example, how did racial
identity, societal norms, and politics infuse, complicate, and/or enrich the
experiences of my white paternal great grandfather, who, after burying his first
African American wife and then migrating from Logan County, West Virginia, to
Huntington in the 1930s, married his second black bride, my great grandmother?
Moreover, an historical examination of the nature (and fluidity) of black sexual
identity and politics in the region is also needed. Such a work might help
illuminate the unique forces, dynamics, and intersections impacting and informing
the lives, experiences and aspirations of my gay family members and friends.
These and other questions wait to be answered.
With the 1954 decision Brown v. the Board of Education, many Douglass High students began attending Huntington High School. In 1959, Douglass held its last graduation before closing. Many of the sons and daughters of former Douglass students attended and graduated from the school.

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UNPUBLISHED THESES AND DISSERTATIONS


Appendix A: Virginia Slave Totals, 1860.

**Slaveholders and Slaves in Virginia—1860**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of slaves</th>
<th>1 only</th>
<th>2-9</th>
<th>10-19</th>
<th>20-49</th>
<th>over 50</th>
<th>total holders</th>
<th>total slaves</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virginia holders</td>
<td>11,085</td>
<td>26,492</td>
<td>8,774</td>
<td>4,917</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>52,128</td>
<td>475,528</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabell County holders</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>3+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Distribution of Slaves**

- Virginian holders owning less than 10 slaves: 35,577=72%
- Virginian holders owning 10-49 slaves: 13,691=26%
- Virginian holders owning more than 50 slaves: 860=2%

*Source: Carrie Eldridge, *Cabell County's Empire for Freedom: The Manumission of Sampson Sanders' Slaves* (Huntington, West Virginia: The John Deaver Drinko Academy for American Political Institution and Civic Culture, Marshall University, 1999), xvi.*
## APPENDIX B: Occupational Statistics for Huntington’s African American Population

### Table B.1. Occupations of Huntington’s African American Population by Industry, 1870

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Males Employed</th>
<th>Females employed</th>
<th>Total Employed</th>
<th>% of labor force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steamboat</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled/Semiskilled</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table B.2. Occupations for African American Men, 1870

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number employed</th>
<th>Percent of reported Working male population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barber</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drayman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Worker/ Works on Farm</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railroad laborer/ Works on railroad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table B.3. Occupations for African American Women, 1870

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number employed</th>
<th>Percent of reported Working female population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At home *</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic servant</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House keeper/Keeper of House</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>34</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure includes females twelve years of age and above.*
Table B.4. Occupations of Huntington’s African American Population by Industry, 1880

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Males Employed</th>
<th>Females employed</th>
<th>Total Employed</th>
<th>% of labor force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steamboat</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled/Semiskilled</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>197</strong></td>
<td><strong>116</strong></td>
<td><strong>313</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B.5. Occupations for African American Men, 1880

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number employed</th>
<th>Percent of reported Working male population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barber</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black smith</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boiler shop worker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick yard worker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cigar Maker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook (incl. on steamboat)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depot worker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drayman</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Worker/ Works on Farm</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fireman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundry worker</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostler</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel Porter</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railroad laborer/ Works on railroad</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store porter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store worker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steam boat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamster</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>197</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table B.6. Occupations for African American Women, 1880

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number employed</th>
<th>Percent of reported Working female population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At home</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic servant</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House keeper/Keeper of House</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>130</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B.7. Occupations of Huntington’s African American Population by Industry, 1891-92

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Males Employed</th>
<th>Females employed</th>
<th>Total Employed</th>
<th>% of labor force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steamboat</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled/Semiskilled</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>106</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>130</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B.8. Occupations for African American Men, 1891-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number employed</th>
<th>Percent of reported Working male population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barber</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartender</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drayman</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundry man</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hod Carrier</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House boy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janitor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laborer</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machine man</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peddler</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasterer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railroad laborer/</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wks on railroad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table B.9. Occupations for African American Women, 1891-2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number employed</th>
<th>Percent of reported Working female population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At home</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>66.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarding house</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chambermaid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic servant</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House keeper/Keeper of House</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundress</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washerwoman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B.10. Occupations of Huntington’s African American Population by Industry, 1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Males Employed</th>
<th>Females employed</th>
<th>Total Employed</th>
<th>% of labor force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steamboat</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled/Semiskilled</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>232</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>337</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
<td><strong>406</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B.11. Occupations for African American Men, 1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number employed</th>
<th>Percent of reported Working male population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attorney</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axel forge</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barber</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartender</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell boy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick layer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick maker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cab driver</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cart driver/driver</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy/pastor</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

391
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number employed</th>
<th>Percent of reported Working female women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common/day laborer</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drayman</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm hand</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fireman</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundry man</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery Clerk</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hod Carrier</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostler</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janitor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latch work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lath turner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortar maker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasterer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railroad laborer/ Wks on railroad</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railroad Porter</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone Mason</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamster</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truck builder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiter</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch man</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>337</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B.12. Occupations for African American Women, 1900

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number employed</th>
<th>Percent of reported Working female women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At home</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarding house</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chambermaid</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic servant</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress maker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair dresser</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundress</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washerwoman</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>153</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table B.13. Industry Breakdown by Jobs as Listed in Census

**Steamboat**
- Boat hand/Steamboat hand/
- Deck hand/River hand
- Boatman/Steamboat Man/River man
- Cabin Boy
- Canal boat man
- Fireman/Steamboat fireman
- River basher
- River character
- River leader
- River porter
- Sailor
- Steamboat barber
- Steamboat berthmaker
- Steamboat cook
- Steamboat laborer
- Steamboat Pantry man
- Steamboat steward
- Steamboat waiter

**Service**
- Artist
- Baggage master
- Barkeeper
- Bartender
- Bootblack
- Butler
- Carriage driver
- Cash driver
- Clerk
- Coachman
- Coffeehouse worker
- Domestic
- Driver
- Dry good clerk
- Eating house worker
- Express driver
- Grocer
- Hack driver
- Help
- Hosier
- Hostler
- Hotel Watchman
- Huckster
- Knife shiner
- Market man
- Messenger
- Pantry man
- Peddler
- Porter
- Restaurant help
- Servant/Maid

**Skilled/Semiskilled**
- Baker
- Barber
- Blacksmith
- Bricklayer
- Brickmason
- Brickmoulder
- Builder
- Cabinetmaker
- Camp roofer
- Carpenter
- Carriage maker
- Caulker
- Cigarmaker
- Confectioner
- Cook
- Cooper
- Daguerreotypist
- Dressmaker
- Drummer
- Dyer
- Engineer
- Farmer
- Furnituremaker
- Hairdresser
- Machinist
- Mantuamaker
- Moulder
- Musician
- Painter
- Pastry cook
- Plasterer
- Picture maker
- Rectifier
- Seamstress
- Swing shop worker
- Shoemaker
- Silver plater
- Tailor
- Tanner
- Tobacconist
- Turner
- Wheelwright
- Whitewasher
- Wood cutter
- Wood sawyer
Table B.13. (cont.)

**Unskilled**

Boiler cleaner  
Car porter  
Chambermaid  
Cleans offices  
Drayman  
Hack driver  
Hod carrier  
Housecleaner/Housework/Housekeeper  
Janitor  
Laborer/Day laborer/Levee laborer  
Rag picker  
Washerwoman/Washer/Scourer of clothes  
Water hauler  
Wood guard

**Entrepreneurial**

Astrologist  
Bedstead manufacturer  
Boarding house keeper  
Clothes dealer  
Coal dealer  
Fruit dealer  
Landlord  
Merchant  
Saloon keeper  
Speculator

**Professional/Semiprofessional**

Attorney  
Clergy  
Druggist  
Nurse  
Physician/Doctor/Root doctor  
School teacher  
Sister/matron  
Superintendent