

Rendville, Ohio: An Historical Geography of a Distinctive
Community in Appalachian Ohio, 1880-1900

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This thesis titled
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Community in Appalachian Ohio, 1880-1900

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ABSTRACT

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Rendville, Ohio, was an anomaly in time and place. This small Appalachian coal mining town was a model of successful integration during the post-Reconstruction era, a period in which race relations were at their lowest. Located in the majority white northern coalfields, Rendville's unusual demographic profile, a mixed population of African Americans, native whites, and foreign-born immigrants, was the product of distinctive historical settlement processes.

Employing historical records, this thesis argues that Rendville's distinctive character was the result of a variety of factors including the efforts of a progressive coal operator, William P. Rend, whose hiring practices and equal pay policies offered economic security for African Americans.

This thesis argues that African Americans in Rendville were agents of their own social change during the nineteenth century. By utilizing a network of social organizations and an interracial labor union, they established the framework for a successful African-American community.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the historical and geographic changes in the town of Rendville, Ohio, as it progressed from an early stage coal town to a distinctive community within Appalachian Ohio. This research will focus on African-American community building and changing demographics in the period 1880 to 1900. These years represent the founding of the town to the census of 1900, which marks the beginning of the town's decline in population.

Background

In 1880, 125 African-American men, women, and children migrated from West Virginia to Rendville, Ohio. Coal operators in the recently developed town were offering equal pay for African Americans, which was rare in this time period. Angered by this move, white miners from neighboring towns descended upon Rendville, 1200 strong, with the intention to "drive the negroes out of the Sunday Creek Valley" (Colborn, 1883, p. 40). As tensions increased, Governor Charles Foster sent in several troops of National Guardsmen. A small skirmish occurred between the miners and the troops but in the end, the miners dispersed and the situation ended peacefully.

Despite this rough start, African Americans persisted in Rendville and helped to create a vibrant and productive community. By 1900, the positions of mayor, town marshal, and postmaster had all been held by African Americans, elected by a white majority.

Rendville's demographic characteristics also changed dramatically over the years. Before African Americans came to Rendville in 1880, the population was 100 % white with over half of the working population foreign born. Forty years later, the 1920 census listed the population of Rendville at 38 % white, 32 % African American and 27 % Mulatto (U.S. Census, 1920).

Historical Background

In the era after the Civil War and Reconstruction many African Americans migrated north to escape the harsh racial conditions of the South and to further their chances for employment. A large number of African Americans went to work in the Appalachian coalfields. By 1900, 54% of miners in Alabama were African American; in West Virginia 22 % of miners were African American. In contrast, only 2.3% of Ohio miners were African American. While Alabama and West Virginia's African-American mining population rose to almost 50%, Ohio's never rose above 5% (Corbin, 1985, Gerber, 1976).

Rendville, Ohio, was an anomaly in the coalfields of Appalachian Ohio, a small town whose population was a judicious mixture of African Americans, foreign born and native whites. Surrounded by racially segregated towns and often-hostile neighboring residents, Rendville offered African Americans equal opportunities for advancement. A number of "firsts" in Ohio's African-American history can be directly linked to the town. In 1887, a white majority elected Isaiah Tuppins to the office of mayor, making him the first African-American elected mayor in the north central United States (Nelson, 1996). Among Rendville's residents were Ohio's first African-American woman mayor and

postmaster and Adam Clayton Powell Sr., a pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement and pastor of the largest protestant church in the United States (Nelson, 1996). Rendville miner Richard L. Davis was the first African American elected to the national board of the United Mine Workers of America in 1896 (Hill, 1995).

Rendville was never fully a company town, as it was created in part by the Ohio Central Coal Company and in part by William P. Rend, a Chicago industrialist. The development of private homes and businesses in the town ensured that Rendville was not under strict company control (Nelson, 1996). This is not to say that the owners were not involved in the community. Rend and the Ohio Central Coal Company financed many of the facilities in Rendville including churches, recreation halls, and schools for both African-American and white residents (Tribe, 1986).

Similar to the rest of the Hocking Valley coal towns, Rendville was characterized by a “boom and bust” economy based on a fluctuating market. This led to periods of economic prosperity and other periods of depression and destitution. In 1891, the mines owned by the Sunday Creek Coal Company and William P. Rend were closed and residents, out of work for months, were desperate. *The Chicago Herald* on March 13, 1891, reported that a group of miners in Rendville had broken into McCoy and Williams' store and stolen "thirty barrels of flour and several hundred pounds of meat." The paper noted that the miners in Rendville were in a “destitute condition” (“Starving Miners Rob a Store,” 1891).

Again in 1894 and 1895, residents in Rendville went through periods without work. During these years the entire nation was also in a depression. Gutman (1977) noted

that during this period, a large number of African-American miners from Rendville were “hired away” by the North Pacific Coal Company in Washington State (p. 179).

By 1895, the residents of Rendville were desperate for help. John L. Jones and Mayor David Wells “petitioned” Ohio’s Governor William McKinley for food and clothing for 225 families in Rendville (Nelson, 1996, p. 31). *The Washington Post* reported on February 17, 1895, that the Standard Oil Company had shipped “100 barrels of flour, 200 sacks of cornmeal, and 1,200 pounds of side meat” to Rendville in response to Governor McKinley’s requests for help (“Suffering Among Ohio Miners,” 1895).

The 1900 census revealed the beginning of a gradual population decline in Rendville, as well as in other Hocking Valley coal towns. As the industry declined, residents left in search of work. A strike in 1927 put an end to large-scale coal mining in the Hocking Valley. McElhoe (1955) noted that after this strike “every city in the Hocking Valley coal mining area declined in population except Athens” (p. 163). By 1956, only 300 people were left in the town, the majority which were African American. In 2010, the census listed only 30 residents. The demographic makeup was 81 % white, 8 % African American, and 11 % Multi-race (U.S. Census 2010).

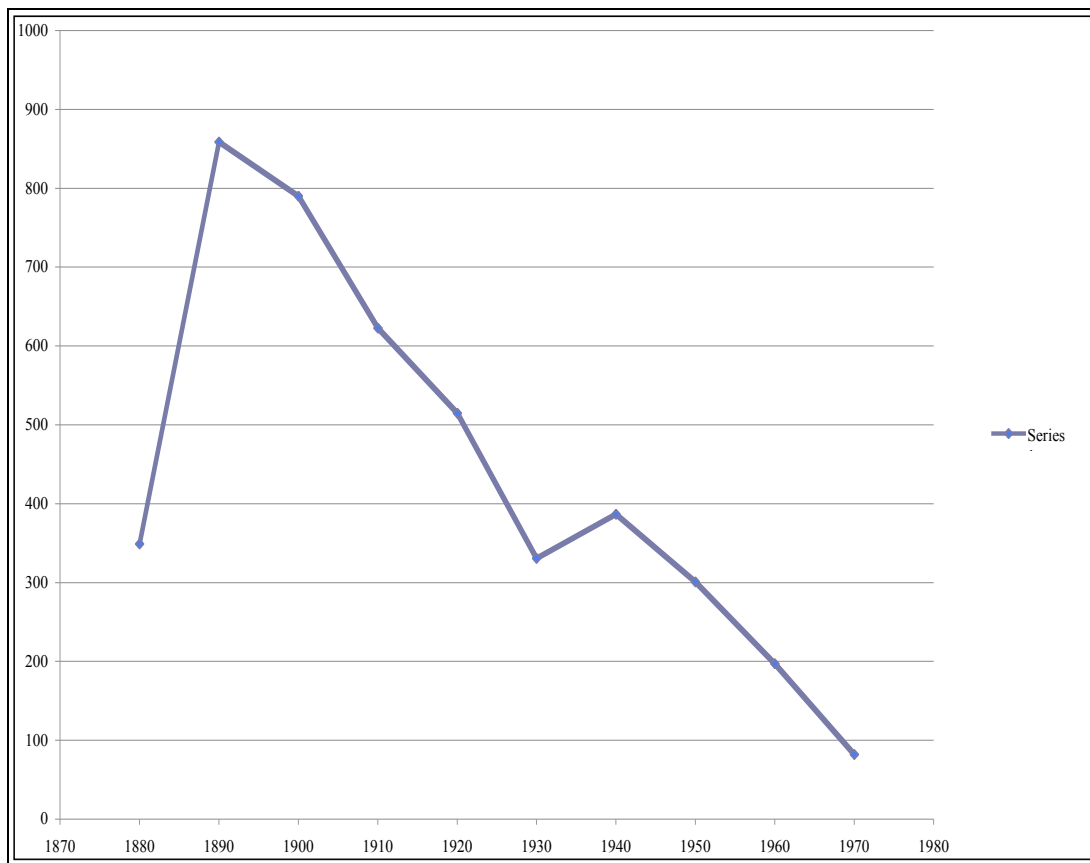


Figure 1.1. The population of Rendville, established in 1880, peaked in 1890 and by 1970 had dropped to less than 100. Data from *Little Cities of Black Diamonds: Urban Development in the Hocking Coal Region, 1870 – 1900* (Tribe, 1986).

Similar Studies

Schwieder, Hraba, and Schwieder (2003) posed the question of whether racial or ethnic discrimination existed in Buxton, Iowa, an interracial coal mining town. Using personal interviews, census data and employment records, they examined the question of race discrimination and found that none existed. The authors concluded that this successful integration was, in part due to, the Consolidated Coal Company's practice of welfare capitalism.

Deaner (2004) examined the role of persistence in the majority African-American population of Keystone, West Virginia. He found that factors in the success of this African-American community included home ownership, economic diversity and participation in social, religious and political organizations.

Significance

In this thesis, I argue that Rendville was unique in the Hocking Valley for several reasons. First, it was an anomaly in time and place, a successfully integrated town during the post-Reconstruction era, a time of nationwide racial discrimination and disenfranchisement. Geographically, it was located in the majority white northern coalfields, where native-born miners, fearing the loss of their jobs, normally used exclusion and violence to direct race relations. Rendville's population, however, was a "judicious mixture" of native whites, foreign born, and African Americans. Second, the founder and operator of the town, William P. Rend, was a different kind of coal operator than most. He was considered a maverick in the field as he often took the side of miners over that of other coal operators. His hiring practices and equal pay policies helped to distinguish Rendville from the other Hocking Valley coal towns. Third, the demographic profile of Rendville was distinctive from other towns in the northern coalfields as well. In 1900, the towns of the Hocking Valley were overwhelmingly white, with African Americans comprising only 3.7 % of the population. Rendville, however, had a population that was over one-third (38 %) African American. Lastly, I argue that Rendville was distinctive because it was a catalyst for an unusually high number of African-American success stories. Residents in the town gained leadership positions in

the community and created the framework for a number of “firsts” in Ohio’s African-American history.

Rendville was an unlikely success. During the post-Reconstruction era, African Americans were disenfranchised and excluded, not only socially but legally as well. Jim Crow and “black laws” made it difficult for African Americans to succeed during this “nadir” of race relations. In Ohio, “black laws” ensured that African Americans were barred from voting and attending public school until 1887. In the northern coalfields region, race relations between whites and African Americans were tenuous. This was particularly true in the Hocking Valley, where there was a history of deeply embedded racial animosity as a result of African-American strikebreaking. In Rendville, however, African Americans were able to succeed and live freely without fear among a white majority. They received equal pay and held prominent positions within the town.

Many of the circumstances that made Rendville different can be attributed to William P. Rend, a progressive coal operator who was often considered unconventional. His hiring practices and insistence on equal pay and fair treatment led to Rendville becoming a haven for African Americans. He was especially renowned for his arbitration efforts in favor of miners. There was often a contentious relationship between miners and coal operators. Disputes over pay and working conditions led to strikes and the use of strikebreakers, which then led to violence against “scabs” and company property. The Hocking Valley Strike of 1884-85 demonstrated how contentious the relationship could be. When the Hocking Coal and Iron Company, a large syndicate, announced a new contract with a substantial pay reduction, the union called a strike and the company hired almost 500 strikebreakers. The violence began almost immediately as dozens of mines

and mine property were burned and destroyed. This strike involved almost every mine in the Hocking Valley, except for the ones owned by Rend and the Ohio Central Coal Company. During this strike, Rend took the side of the miners and refused to lower miner's wages. He also donated one hundred dollars to the relief fund for the striking miners (McCormick, 1978). This was typical of Rend, who often "bucked the trend" of coal operators and helped solidify Rendville's importance in the region.

The third reason Rendville was unique was that it had a distinctive demographic profile compared to the northern coalfields; it also stood out in the Hocking Valley. A substantial number of African Americans had migrated to the Appalachian coalfields of West Virginia, and by 1900, 22 % of coal miners in the state were African American. In contrast, Ohio's African-American mining population was only 2.3 % that same year and never rose above 5 %. This was the case in most of the northern coalfields as coal mining had traditionally been a white profession. African Americans in the Hocking Valley were few and far between and only comprised 3.6 % of the population in 1900. However, Rendville's population was 38 % African American. Native-born white and foreign-born residents comprised the rest of the population in equal numbers, creating a "judicious mixture" of native white, foreign born, and African-American residents.

The most unique and enduring feature of Rendville was the number of success stories created by African-American leaders in the community. During this period, African Americans throughout the United States had little opportunity for advancement and entrepreneurship. As they were delegated to non-managerial positions and subservient positions, business training was nonexistent. Entrepreneurial investment, as well, required capital that they, as a disenfranchised group, were unlikely to have.

Through social organizations and the efforts of leaders in the African-American community, Rendville became a place where opportunity was possible. By 1900, Rendville produced the first African-American mayor in the north central United States, the first African-American member of the National Executive Board of the UNMW, and numerous African-American business owners. These unlikely success stories helped to create the framework for the first African-American woman mayor and the first African-American woman postmaster in Ohio, as well as numerous residents who went on from Rendville to succeed in business and political life.

Question

The population of Rendville, Ohio, consisted of almost equal percentages of native whites, African Americans, and foreign born. This community grew and developed into an integrated thriving society, producing a number of firsts in African-American history. This study will address the question: how did this distinctive community change and develop during the years 1880-1900?

Methodology

The demographics of Rendville changed dramatically over the years, from a majority white to majority African-American population. The methodology for the analysis of the demographic profile will be empirical in nature and will analyze population statistics in Rendville over a twenty-year span. This will include analysis of historical census data for the years 1880 to 1900, as well as research of other historical data including newspapers, books, and documents. A section on African-American

community building will focus on the social and cultural aspects of Rendville as it progressed from an early stage coal town to a distinctive community. *The New Lexington Tribune*, a local newspaper, and *The Cleveland Gazette*, an African-American newspaper, will provide the bulk of the historical documents for this section.

Delimitations

The time period 1880 to 1900 was chosen as it represents the founding of the town to the census of 1900, which marked the beginning of Rendville's population decline. The geographic boundaries for this study will be those designated by the U.S. Census Bureau for the village of Rendville and the Rendville Voting Precinct during those years.

Limitations

Limitations in this study include illegibility and accuracy of historical census data and governmental records. African-American records may also be challenging to find as well. However many of the African American-newspapers have been digitized and are available online.

Chapter Details

A literature review in chapter two provides reference material on coal towns, African-American migration and African-American community building. Chapter three examines the historical background and early development of Rendville. Chapter four constructs the framework for the successful African-American community in Rendville,

focusing on social organizations and business entrepreneurship. Chapter five concludes the thesis and expands on the reasons Rendville was a distinctive community in the Appalachian coalfields. The Appendix details a demographic profile of Rendville's workforce in 1880 and 1900.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study will examine the changes in the distinctive community of Rendville, Ohio, and argue that it was an anomaly in both time and place as a result of several factors. Those factors included a progressive coal operator whose hiring practices and views on tolerance ran contrary to others in the region, a demographic population that was unlike any other in the Hocking Valley, and a group of African Americans who used this space to become agents of their own social change.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This historical geography of Rendville, Ohio, will add to established literature in the field of African-American studies, Appalachian diversity, and coal town development. The thesis will encompass several themes, including coal towns in Appalachia, African-American migration, and African-American community building.

Coal Towns

The Gilded Age

Rendville, Ohio, was a product of the “Gilded Age,” established during a time of rampant speculation and entrepreneurship in the Hocking Valley coalfields. After the Civil War and Reconstruction, America went through a period of extreme transformation. In this Gilded Age, the nation left behind an era of agricultural economy and began a transition to one of industry, finance, and big business. Powerful financiers often controlled much of the railroad, communication and natural resource industries. Shrock (2004) noted “the country was transformed by forces of immigration, industrialization, corporatization, urbanization, mechanization and a revolution in transportation” (p. xi).

Production increased dramatically during these years as railroads opened up access to mineral resources. “In 1870 agricultural production surpassed industrial production by about 500 million...but by 1900, industrial production exceeded agricultural production by 13 billion to 4.7 billion.” One of the most dramatic changes could be seen in bituminous coal production. In 1860, 9.0 tons of coal was produced in the United States, but by 1900, the number had risen to 212.3 tons, an increase of 2,358% (Cashman, 1993, p. 11).

This was also a time of tremendous population growth. In 1865, the U.S. population was 35.7 million, but by 1901 it had more than doubled to 77.6 million. The foreign-born population had also risen, from 9.7% in 1850 to 13.6% in 1900. Much of this population growth could be attributed to an increased need for employment in manufacturing. Between 1865 and 1890 the number of people employed in manufacturing more than tripled, rising from 1.3 million to 4.5 million (Cashman, 1993, p. 11).

Ohio in the Gilded Age

The transformation of Ohio served as an excellent example of the Gilded Age. Located “between the agricultural west and the industrial east,” Ohio was not only a leader in agricultural production and domesticated animals, but held the promise of unlimited natural resources. During this period Ohio advanced “socially, politically and economically” and its industrial focus was on “modernity, machine and money” (Jordan, 1968, p. 3).

Ohio’s population rose as well, following the same national patterns. From 1873 to 1906, the population rose from 2.7 million to 4.2 million, increasing by 64%. Immigrants also represented part of the population growth. In 1900, 11% of Ohio’s total population was foreign born. The majority of these immigrants, 71 %, resided in the country and only 29% in Ohio’s cities (Jordan, 1968).

Transportation improvements made a tremendous difference in Ohio during the Gilded Age. In the early years of the Hocking Valley, canals were vital to shipping before the Gilded Age. The Hocking Valley Canal reached Athens in 1842 and opened up coal

and mineral deposits to the rest of the state (Scheiber, 1987). This canal was the “most important export route for coal from the region until 1870” (Mould, 1994, p. 179).

Canals, however, had their shortcomings including cost, maintenance, and vulnerability to weather. By the time the last Ohio canal was finished, they had become obsolete for shipping, replaced by the rapidly growing railroads.

Railroads were a major part of the Gilded Age as they provided a means of transportation, not only for people and products, but also for the shipment of minerals and natural resources. Although railroads were a national phenomenon, they were especially important in Ohio. As early as 1860, Ohio already had more railroad tracks than any other state (Scheiber, 1987). By 1870, there were 32 separately operating railroads and by 1900 that number had tripled to over 100 (Jordan, 1968). The Hocking Valley benefited tremendously from railroad expansion as it created access to vast quantities of coal. Without these transportation links, many of the cities within the Hocking Valley would not have been developed.

Coal Towns

The social structure and race relations of coal towns varied widely depending on the geographical area and individual coal operators. Much of this depended on whether the town was considered a “company town.” James T. Laing (1985) suggested that coal companies were compelled to create self-sustaining towns and serve as resource providers because many mines were in isolated areas. Companies established towns, hired miners, and provided everything a miner and his family might need. This included housing, a company store, and even security (Shifflett, 1991). Along with basic needs,

employers often built schools, churches and recreational centers for their workers.

Some scholars believe this was a form of paternalism, called welfare capitalism, which helped to keep workers, especially African Americans, in “subordinate positions” (Arnesen, 2007). Hennen (1996) noted that this practice was widely used in coal towns and suggested that it was the “prime ingredient in the recipe for employer control over production” (p. 100).

The quality of housing in company towns varied widely from a “state of disrepair... to those with paved streets and running water” (Laing, 1985, p. 74). Company towns were abundant in rural Appalachia. By 1925, 80 % of coal miners in West Virginia lived in company towns. In comparison, only 23.4 % of Ohio miners lived in company towns in the same year (Shifflett, 1991).

While many historians viewed company towns as oppressive to the workforce, Shifflett (1991) noted that all company towns were unique and influenced by a number of changing factors. Gray-Ray and Hraba (1995) suggested that the company town structure in Buxton, Iowa, was a strong force in creating interracial harmony. Ben Buxton, the company owner, provided integrated housing as well as equal pay and public facilities to all employees. The authors argue that this helped to prevent a “caste system” from developing. Like Rendville, Buxton was not fully a company town, as private residences and businesses were permitted within the town.

The majority of scholars, however, believe that industrial capitalists used company towns as an instrument to control the workforce. Operators often employed strict control over housing, company stores, church services and schools. Some operators limited the use of the roads and forbade trespassers into the towns. Fishback (1992)

suggested that company owned homes were especially effective in controlling the workforce. As private property, coal operators could legally prevent union organizers or sympathizers from entering the town. For employees, the threat of losing not only one's employment but also their home led to a more obedient workforce.

In 1892, union organizer and Rendville resident Richard Davis spoke critically of the newly established company town of Congo, Ohio, in a series of letters to the *United Mine Workers Journal*. Congo, located less than two miles north of Rendville, was a typical self-sustaining company town, noted as a "model town." Congo's residents lived in company houses, were paid with company scrip, and the entire town was surrounded by a fenced border. Outsiders were not allowed to enter through the gates of the town without company permission. Davis condemned the lack of freedom for Congo miners and referred to the town as the Ohio Miners Prison or the O.M.P. He was particularly angered about Congo's segregated housing and workforce and suggested that this separation only served to "breed strife" among the races. In 1897, after union organizers had infiltrated Congo, Davis recanted his position on the town calling it "the best mining camp in this part of the valley" (Gutman, 1977, p. 139).

David Corbin (1985) suggested that the rigid control of power in company towns created a sense of "group oppression" which led to discontent, not with each other on racial boundaries, but against the coal operator. Corbin stated that this "interracial harmony" was a compelling force in the move toward integrated unionism (p. 93). Fishback (1992) noted that discrimination against African-American miners was more apparent in areas that contained all white unions. In contrast, areas where African

Americans were a part of the labor force before unionization, experienced less discrimination.

Segregation

Most coal towns were similar to conventional towns in following state rules and contemporary social customs in the integration or segregation of housing and recreational facilities. There were rare residential exceptions regarding segregation in coal towns. Whites occasionally lived in African-American sections of town, but “recreational and public facilities were nearly always separate” (Lewis, 1987, p. 151). The more common pattern, however, was for coal operators to assign African Americans and ethnic foreigners to their own parts of town. Local whites often used derogatory words to describe these areas. For example, the African-American area of Congo was known as “Nigger Hill” (Tribe, 1977, p. 159) and the town of Rendville was called “Ebony Hollow” (Nelson, 1996, p. 27).

Jobs were commonly segregated, both by designation and by exclusion. African Americans were unlikely to be hired as managers unless it was an entirely African-American mine. They were also more likely to work in dangerous jobs within the mine (Condee, 2005). Armstead (2002) noted that “blacks did the meager-paying backbreaking jobs, often getting paid less wages [sic] than their white fellow employees for doing the same job” (p.36). Many mines, such as Number Three in Rendville, were established specifically for African-American workers. In Ohio’s Hocking Valley, African Americans were excluded from working in white mines. This practice was in place until

the middle of the 1880s, when the Knights of Labor, the local labor union, ended mine segregation in Rendville (Gutman, 1977).

Most African Americans living in coal towns faced the same issues of discrimination and inequality as in other towns across the country. The quality of housing, jobs, and public facilities were almost always inferior to those of whites (Spero and Harris, 1968). Most African-American miners were not dispersed throughout white communities but clustered in a select number of towns. Lewis (1994) suggested coal mining towns with large African-American populations were a result of coal operators creating “colonies” for African-American miners. As an example, he cited the Ohio towns of Buchtel, Congo, and Rendville. Many historians agree that West Virginia was the exception in race relations, rather than the rule. Shifflett (1991) noted that with the exception of a few towns in West Virginia, virtually all coal industry towns were segregated by race or ethnicity.

Geographic Influence

Lewis (1994) cited “dramatic variations in the patterns of race relations in the coal fields of the North, the South, and Central Appalachia.” He explained that this was a result of structural conditions. Race relations in the South were determined by a long held belief in the caste system. Traditionally, it was accepted that African Americans held lower paying, inferior mining positions in the South. White miners accepted African-American miners as long as they persisted in these inferior positions. Coal operators in the South would often use this “caste etiquette” against African Americans to break up interracial solidarity. In Central Appalachia, where African Americans were not in

competition for jobs, coal operators used the practice of “judicious mixture” to control race relations. Lewis (1987) explained that coal operators would hire an equal mixture of African Americans, native whites, and Europeans. This, in theory, would keep any one group from gaining too much power and would prevent solidarity and labor issues from occurring. However, this practice often backfired as miners overcame racial and cultural differences to “foster a class consciousness.”

Rendville was not located in Central Appalachia where this practice was used. It was, in fact, closer geographically and socially to the northern coalfields where white miners held a deep-seated hatred for African-American miners. In the North, the structure was different in that traditionally only whites held mining jobs. They were unwilling to cede those jobs to African Americans and used exclusion to direct race relations in the North (Lewis, 1994, p. 57). However, the workforce of Rendville was equally divided among white, African-American and foreign-born residents in a “judicious mixture.”

Labor Unions

In single industry resource towns, such as a coal town, life often revolved around the price of coal and the availability of work. The union was a strong, often divisive, presence in many towns. Labor scholars are divided whether the union, specifically the United Mine Workers of America, was an integral part in interracial unity or a deterrent in keeping African Americans from positions of power. Herbert Gutman, a Marxist labor historian, suggested that the UMWA was the reason behind successful integrated communities such as Rendville. He concluded that race issues were overcome by the unity of class against the working establishment (Gutman, 1977). He noted that in the

period when African Americans were being disenfranchised nationwide, the Knights of Labor and the UMWA were recruiting and welcoming African-American miners into their organizations. He cited a number of examples to prove this point, primarily the letters of Richard Davis, published in the *United Mine Workers Journal*.

Grob (1961) noted that from the beginning, Knights of Labor leaders Uriah Smith Stephens and Terence Powderly, “advocated the admission of Negroes into the Knights of Labor either in local assemblies including white and black or all-Negro ones.” He also noted that in areas where there was existing racial hostility, separate assemblies were organized (p. 53). In their bylaws and resolutions, the Knights of Labor instituted equal rights in the labor field but stayed clear of mandated social interaction between whites and African Americans. Records from the 1886 proceedings of the Knights of Labor General Assembly stated that the organization “recognized the civil and political equality of all men...[however] it has no purpose to interfere with or disrupt the social relations which may exist between different races in any portion of the country” (Grob, 1961, p. 54).

The UMWA was also committed to the idea of racial unity among its members. Spero and Harris (1968) noted that their creed included the phrase “united in one organization, regardless of creed, color or nationality.” However, the authors also noted that “racial antipathy” led African Americans to defect from the UMWA during the 1927 strike (p. 355).

On the other hand, contemporary labor scholar Herbert Hill suggested that neo-Marxist scholars such as Gutman ignored evidence about widespread racial hostility and conflict within the union to support “ideological requirements” (Hill, 1995, p. 325). He

stated that Gutman rationalized white racism by placing the blame on practices of the coal operators, rather than on the miners themselves. Hill (1988) suggested that instead of creating racial unity, white miners and union leaders had constructed an institutional framework to exclude African Americans from better positions within the mines. This led to uneven job distribution and lack of representation for African-American miners. He also noted that after Richard Davis, there were no African Americans on the executive board of the UMWA for almost 75 years.

Hill also attributed the decline in African-American membership in the UMWA to the fact that the organization had tripled in size, from less than 10,000 to more than 33,000 by the late 1890s. He inferred that the union had less of a need for African-American members once the organization had grown (Hill, 1988).

Unions, whether interracial or not, were highly influential with regard to political power in smaller single industry towns, with high mining populations. Fink (1983) noted that the Knights of Labor used their powerful influence in communities to create “labor tickets” in municipal elections. He suggested that Rendville’s historic election of an African-American mayor, Isaiah Tuppins, was the result of “a common wave of labor feeling” associated with the Knights of Labor ticket (p. 26). Fink stated that the union was so embedded in the community that “[it] had grown strong and distinctive enough to define its own political vehicle” (Fink, 1983, p. 225). Fink also noted that labor unions were an integral part of the community as they hosted reading rooms, social clubs and were a constant presence at community events.

Early African-American Migration

The Gilded Age migration is often overshadowed by the Great Migration, which peaked around 1917. During this time, African-American migration increased from 300,000 in 1910 to almost one million by World War I (Trotter, 1991).

However, movement of free African Americans began before the Civil War. These early migrations were predominantly rural to urban and were the result of variety of push-pull factors. Push factors included limited economic, educational, and social opportunities in the South. Pull factors included improved economic and social conditions in the North. As push-pull models are based on homogeneous populations, and not individual migration decisions, this did not account for individual migrations (Goodwin, 1990).

There were African Americans, such as Frederick Douglass, who were highly critical of migration. He believed it to be a “confession by Blacks that they and their white neighbors were unable to live together in peace and prosperity.” He also suggested that an influx of African Americans would lead to racial animosity in the North (Goodwin, p. 2).

A large number of African Americans migrated during the “Gilded Age.” From the 1870s to the 1880s, almost 100,000 African Americans migrated from the rural South to southern and northern cities. The next decade, from the 1890s to the 1900s, the number doubled to nearly 200,000 (Goodwin, 1990). Trotter (1991) suggested that it was common for railroad and coal companies to recruit African Americans from the South. He noted that the African-American population increased in West Virginia alone from

4,800 in 1880 to over 40,000 in 1910. Many African Americans who migrated to West Virginia to work on the railroads stayed behind to work in the newly opened coalmines.

Ohio's percentage of African-American miners was smaller than that of the surrounding states. Fishback (1992) cited that in 1900, there were only 780 African-American miners in Ohio compared to 23,451 native white miners and 7,700 immigrants. In comparison, there were 4,620 African-American miners in West Virginia compared to its 13,209 native whites and 2,968 immigrants.

In Ohio the African-American population rose 39 % between 1870 and 1890. However, most African Americans did not enter the Midwest directly from the South. Blocker (2008) noted that in the lower Midwest (which he defines as Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois) step migration was common. Between 1859 and 1889, 43 % of African American-migrants had made at least one stop in other northern areas before settling in the lower Midwest.

The Nadir of Race Relations

Logan (1954) suggested the period after Reconstruction was the lowest point in race relations between African Americans and whites. State governments enacted Jim Crow laws, which insured that public facilities, schools and transportation remained segregated. This trend of separation was reified in 1896 with the U.S. Supreme Court ruling of Plessy V. Ferguson, which further validated segregationist policies. Life in the South was particularly difficult for African Americans, not only socially and economically, but also with regard to acts of violence. Between 1889 and 1899, 82 % of all lynching instances in the country were in Southern states.

However, Blocker (2008) argued that while lynching and mob attacks were often associated with the South, the North was not immune to racial violence. He cited 29 cases of African Americans being lynched in Ohio, Illinois and Indiana from 1889 to 1918.

In Ohio there was a strong division between the northern and southern parts of the state with respect to African-American rights and freedoms. Quillin (1969) attributed this division to southern Ohio's ancestry "The intense prejudice of the southern counties was due...to the fact that a large number of the population was from the south...and had a strong antipathy for the negroes" (p. 65).

African Americans as Strikebreakers

The migration of African Americans to the northern coalfields was substantially influenced by the practice of recruiting strikebreakers. Overall, African Americans constituted only a small percentage of strikebreakers but received more backlash and violent reactions than other groups. Foreigners and white miners were used to break strikes in the majority of cases (Arnesen, 2003).

It was common in the South for African Americans to work as miners; many in fact, had worked in the mines as slaves. Mining jobs in the North were traditionally held by whites and foreigners and were considered to be well-respected positions in the community. Much of the violent reaction to African-American strikebreakers may be attributed to the struggles of white miner's struggles, not only with regard to labor control but "efforts to retain social dominance in their communities" as well (Lewis, 1987, p. 79). White workers, already concerned about job losses, attributed the failure of strikes to

black strikebreakers. This helped to reinforce hatred of African Americans (Arnesen, 2003). Booker T. Washington noted the reaction on the use of African-American strikebreakers and stated “Strikers consider it a much greater crime for a negro who had been denied an opportunity to work at his trade to take the place of a striking employee than for a white man to do the same thing” (Spero and Harris, 1968, p. 131).

Many African Americans recruited to break strikes were misrepresented regarding employment situations and misinformed about strikes and the potential for violent confrontation (Eller, 1982). Others were fully aware that they were going into coal mining communities in order to break strikes. Because African Americans from the South had few job prospects, northern industrial jobs were an attractive alternative, offering access to greater economic opportunities (Arnesen, 2003).

Labor unions did little to help improve situations as they often excluded membership to African Americans and were often perceived as racist organizations. Many middle class African Americans were anti-union and encouraged strikebreaking because they believed better jobs would help raise the living conditions of all African Americans. To African Americans, white capitalist employers offered an opportunity for advancement and better pay that they could not receive in the South (Spero & Harris, 1968).

Not all African-American miners were strikebreakers, however. Coal operators in Central Appalachia sought out African Americans from the South to fill their labor force (Shifflett, 1991). The number of African-American miners continued to grow throughout the industrial years, and by 1920 numbered 88,000 in Central Appalachia (Lewis, 1989).

African Americans Strikebreakers in the Hocking Valley

The history of racial animosity in the Hocking Valley began in 1874, before the construction of Rendville had begun. Race relations previous were virtually nonexistent as the population was almost completely white.

On April 1, 1874, coal operators in the Hocking Valley offered miners a controversial new contract. The contract cut wages and introduced a new method of measuring coal, which was disadvantageous to the miners. The coal operators also “proscribed” the National Miners Association and refused to recognize its existence. The union, in return refused to comply with the contract and after two months the operators had been “stalemated” (Gutman, 1962).

Joining forces as a collective, the local coal operators recruited and hired African-American strikebreakers. The striking miners came from the southern cities of Memphis, Louisville, and Richmond (Gutman, 1962). On June 11, 1874, about 400 to 500 African-American miners arrived in Nelsonville on a special train accompanied by armed escorts. After it was discovered by the local miners, “anger swept the valley.” Over 1,000 striking miners and their families gathered at the Longstreth mine in Nelsonville where the African Americans were housed in a military style encampment. Yelling across picket lines, the white miners encouraged the African Americans to leave and to support their solidarity against the coal companies. Over one hundred of the African-American miners left and in later interviews related that they had been misled in coming to the Hocking Valley (Gutman, 1962, p. 258).

John James, secretary of the Miner’s National Association called the Hocking Valley Strike of 1874 a significant crisis, and stated “[it] was important, because of the

introduction of the negro race as an instrument with which to subjugate the white”

(Gutman, 1962, p. 243).

Lewis (1987) pointed out that the Hocking Valley mining population was majority white and native born. He suggests that these striking miners were so deeply entrenched in their communities and in the mines that they felt “an actual property right to their place in the pits” and perceived a real threat to their community (Lewis, 1987, p. 81). As most of the miners were respected community members, local sentiment favored the striking miners over the coal operators. *The Hocking Sentinel*, a local newspaper, referred to the strikebreakers as “these brutal, ignorant, debauched, and idiotic Negroes, gathered from the slums of southern cities ...” and concluded “every white man in the valley would be affected by “the blighting curse this ignorant and debased swarm of savages will inflict if settled upon us” (McCormick, 1978, p. 40).

Decades later, local sentiment still festered toward African Americans. In 1895 an editorial in the *New Lexington Tribune* referred to African-American miners in Rendville as a “horde of barbarian niggers” who “drove the white men out of their houses and compelled white women and children to settle in dugouts” (Lewis, 1987, p. 86).

African-American Community Building

In the late nineteenth century, America was a nation of “joiners.” With a focus on “belonging to the larger society,” local clubs and organizations flourished (Atherton, 1975, p. 245). This was especially true for African Americans as they began to build communities in the post-Reconstruction era.

Trotter (2001) cited four factors as major influences in the creation of an African-American national identity and the creation of a new African-American middle class during the post-Emancipation period. Those factors were fraternal organizations, religious institutions, political networks and interracial unions. Skocpol (2006) suggested that social organizations were beneficial in uplifting marginalized communities as they provided leadership, social integration skills, and community identity. She cited the formation of free spaces, created from groups such as social organizations, as precedents to the Civil Rights Movement.

Participation in politics was also popular in small communities. African Americans, particularly in West Virginia, made up a voting block beneficial to the Republican Party during the late 1890s. Although there were racial overtones in many of the electoral issues, African Americans were able to enter the political field at local levels throughout the state. In West Virginia, one important result of African-American political organizing was the creation of state sponsored schools for African Americans. Trotter (2001) stated that national ties from these local political networks were one of the factors in helping to create a national African-American identity.

African-American Fraternal Organizations

Fraternal orders were often neglected in African-American history as they were seen as “expressive” rather than “instrumental.” Trotter (2004) suggested this gap in the literature omitted an important part of African-American history. By the early twentieth century there were numerous African-American fraternal orders or “parallel

organizations” in the country with a large membership base, including 300,000 Odd Fellows, 250,000 Pythians, 150,000 Masons, and 70,000 Elks.

Trotter (1990) noted that religious institutions, in alignment with fraternal orders, helped to create a new African-American middle class. Gerber (1976) stated that lodges and churches “were vital” in providing respectability and wholesomeness that “the middle class hungered for” (161). He added that there were class distinctions within fraternal organizations, as they were comprised mainly of the middle class. Horton and Horton (1979) also noted that membership in many of these fraternal organizations required modest fees. This in turn, made fraternal orders economically exclusive.

Banned from membership in white fraternal organizations, African-American men and women often established parallel orders such as the “Colored” Odd Fellows and the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons. These orders, along with distinctly African-American orders, played an important role in post-Reconstruction community building. Trotter (2004) noted that fraternal organizations helped shape African-American identity as they assimilated into a free society (p. 362).

African-American fraternal orders often focused on education, community service, self-improvement, and “civil rights concerns” (Skopcol, 2004). These organizations helped members learn leadership skills as they served as officers within the safety of an all-African-American institution. Trotter (2001) noted that the networks created by regional institutions helped to “stimulate the rise of a vigorous black leadership” (p. 285).

In addition, the majority of fraternal lodges provided aid and insurance as well as networking opportunities (Gerber, 1976). Insurance was not an option for African

Americans as agents only offered policies to whites (Skocpol, 2004). Mutual aid and insurance was especially important in coal mining towns, as mining was often dangerous occupation. Depending on the order, funeral money and survivors benefits, up to \$1000, were guaranteed to the family (Gerber, 1976).

African-American Churches

Morris (1984) argued that nineteenth century African-American churches “had the responsibility of spiritually and emotionally soothing an oppressed group” (p. 11). However, Trotter (2001) and Lewis (1989) suggested that African-American churches also provided literacy and leadership skills as well as the development of self-respect. Trotter (1990) noted that leadership roles assigned in the church were especially beneficial to African-American women and young adults. Within the safety of the church they were taught how “to think quickly, perfect their talents, rid [themselves] of stage fright and make friends” (p. 185).

Garrison (2001) suggested that churches and fraternities in coal towns had a mutually beneficial relationship and that “churches recruited members by...making the lodges welcome to the church.” This in turn boosted membership in the church (p. 99).

The church was a cornerstone in the African-American community as it also provided facilities for secular activities (Trotter, 2001). Van West (2008) observed that African-American churches were often located in proximity to fraternal orders, schools and African-American businesses, thus creating a "safe haven" and establishing a "community identity" (p. 447).

Scholars vary on the importance of African-American churches in coal towns.

Condee (2005) noted that it was in the coal operator's best interest to build and finance churches as they implied a sense of "permanence" and stability (p. 75). Corbin (1985) suggested the roles played by African-American churches in coal towns were less beneficial. He cited that churches were often financed and heavily influenced by the coal companies. This helped to suppress worker dissatisfaction and keep the population from unionizing.

African-American Schools

Education among African Americans dramatically improved in the years after Emancipation. Broom and Glenn (1965) noted that in 1860 only two percent of African-American children attended school, but by 1910 that number had increased to 45 %.

In Ohio, laws dating back to 1829 prohibited African Americans from attending regular district schools. In 1848, these "black laws" were repealed and separate African-American school districts had to be organized for more than 20 students per district. This was simplified in 1878 by requiring districts to provide education for African Americans regardless of the number of students per district. By 1887, new laws ended "compulsory separate schools" for African Americans. This left the decision up to individual districts whether to continue to provide separate schools or to integrate them (Erickson, 1960).

Separate facilities for African-American students usually meant the quality of education was inferior to those of whites. Gerber (1976) noted that African-American schools in Ohio were often in substandard facilities, were "poorly located" and had a

shorter school year than white schools. He cited that only 52 % of African-American school-age children attended school, compared to 77 % of white children in 1870 (p. 5).

Gerber noted that one effect of having separate school systems was the high demand and employment of a large number of African-American teachers. Blocker (2008) echoed this sentiment and stated that many African-American teachers lost their positions after the 1887 desegregation ruling. He suggested that white parents refused to accept African-American teachers, and districts were then obliged to hire white teachers for mixed classes.

Corbin (1981) noted that in company towns, coal operators built the schools and often hired and paid the teachers. He suggested that operators did this to achieve an educated work force and to assure that teachers did not discuss labor issues. However, in West Virginia, these coal company schools were immensely beneficial to African-Americans. He cited that in McDowell County alone, 80 % of school age African Americans attended school in 1910.

African-American Business Building

Moore (1999) noted the scarcity of literature regarding African-American businesses during the post-Reconstruction period. Moore explained that past studies of African Americans focused on exclusion and discrimination. African Americans were seen as “passive victims” rather than taking active roles in their own lives. She wrote that most scholars overlooked the small percentage of African-American business owners and leaders.

In the late nineteenth century, African Americans faced many obstacles in procuring employment. Trotter (2007) noted that in the period before WWI, African Americans were usually relegated to jobs in hotels and domestic employment. In most areas manufacturing and clerical positions were not available to them. Business ownership as well presented special challenges as African Americans often had little capital, a small demographic base, and had to negotiate with biased white creditors. There were success stories, however, and a small number of African-American owned businesses were flourishing by the late nineteenth century.

Gerber (1976) explained that these businesses were rare in Ohio “Black retailers and wholesalers numbered only approximately 73 in 1890.” He noted that one could occasionally find an African-American owned clothing or furniture store but most African-American entrepreneurs were in the grocery business (p. 85).

Trotter (2007) stated that barbershops, saloons, and dressmaking shops were also popular avenues among African-American entrepreneurs because they required little initial investment. In Ohio, African-American owned barbershops were successful as well. Gerber (1976) noted that one dilemma of owning a barbershop was whether to have an all-African-American clientele or all white, which was more profitable. Gerber noted that exclusive barbershops in Ohio cities that catered to higher income whites were at “the pinnacle of black business achievement in the nineteenth century” (p. 81).

One major impediment to African-American business entrepreneurship was the lack of practical business experience. Washington (1907) explained that African Americans had few training options, as they were not allowed to work as “a clerk, a bookkeeper or manager, before embarking in business on their own account” (p. 17).

Washington also noted that after emancipation, African Americans were slow to establish businesses and instead focused on education. He stated that of the 76,026 African Americans in the United States in 1900, over 20,000 were teachers and professors, but less than 10,000 were in business positions.

CHAPTER 3: THE DEVELOPMENT OF RENDVILLE

Early Development

The Corning War

On April 1, 1880, coal operators in the Sunday Creek Valley revised their miner's contracts based on a "sliding scale." This new scale meant that miners were to be paid based on the selling price of coal, not "a fixed rate per ton" as was previously offered. Almost all of the miners refused this new contract and quit, leaving coal operators to find workers elsewhere. Months later the Ohio Central Coal Company and William P. Rend hired over 100 African-American miners as replacements. The white miner's response and its aftermath became known as the "Corning War" (Colborn, 1883).

Tension had been building among the coal operators and local miners all summer. In September of 1880, Major Henry Axline of the Ohio National Guard was sent to investigate the situation in Corning. In a telegram to Governor Charles Foster on September 3, 1880, he wrote:

The excitement here is intense, and is liable, in my judgment, to break out in acts of violence and lawlessness at any moment. There is no force here which can be relied upon at all for adequate protection, and the entire community would be at the mercy of the mob should an outbreak occur (Executive Reports, 1881, p. 1117).

Just a few weeks later, over 1000 white miners from New Straitsville, Shawnee, and Nelsonville converged on Rendville (Colborn, 1883, p. 42). W.C. Lemert, superintendent of the Ohio Central Coal Company, responded by arming the African-

American miners and enlisting hired guards to protect the mine. Lemert wired Governor Foster four telegrams throughout the day on September 19, 1880, regarding the potential violence. His messages included statements such as “miners gathering in large forces” and “need prompt action for protection” (Executive Reports, 1881, p. 1118).

Governor Charles Foster responded by deploying Captain T.J. Smith and the “Ewing Guards,” a National Guard troop based in nearby New Lexington. Two other troops from Columbus were readied to travel to Corning with transportation provided by the Ohio Central Railroad (Executive Reports, 1881). When Smith and his men arrived, they found over one thousand agitated local miners. The National Guardsmen went directly to Mine Number Three, where the African-Americans miners were sequestered, and stood guard in various positions protecting the mine and men. Three or four hundred of the protesting local miners made their way to the mineshaft. As the protesters crossed the line where Smith and his men stood guard, shots were fired and a small skirmish occurred. This resulted in the dispersal of the miners. Three of the white miners were wounded but there were no fatalities. National Guard troops remained in Rendville for three weeks but no other incidents were reported (Colborn, 1883, p. 42). A few weeks later, the “sliding scale” method was abandoned.

In Ohio, state interference in mining disputes was not without precedent. In a similar situation, National Guard troops were deployed to Wayne County, Ohio, in May of 1880, to protect African-American strikebreakers from local white miners (Executive Reports, 1881).

The Syndicate

In the Gilded Age era of entrepreneurship, partnerships and corporations were often formed in speculation of great riches. These partnerships, also known as syndicates, controlled multiple interlocking business interests within a region. Taylor (1970) called this a model of “integrated business” or “industrial integration.” This created an “industrial complex designed to achieve economies of scale and to insure that success in any one sector would act to increase the value of the others” (p. 232).

One such group, “the Hocking Syndicate,” consisted of Thomas Ewing Jr., James Taylor, and R. Huston, was responsible for the creation of many of the coal towns in Perry County, including Rendville. The partners built and managed the Ohio Central Railroad, which went through many phases, beginning in 1869 with the incorporation of the Atlantic and Lake Erie Railway Company. The A&LE, was established with the intention of creating a railroad from Toledo to Pomeroy (Graham, 1881, p. 228). This line would go directly through the Sunday Creek Valley, where the group had purchased a considerable amount of land and mineral rights. On speculation they also built mining companies and platted town sites.

By 1872, the syndicate owned mineral rights to over 6,000 acres and began building the towns of Moxahala, Shawnee, Ferrara, Ewing and Carbon Hill (Taylor, 1972, p. 265). However in 1874, after a series of setbacks, the company and its holdings were in financial distress. This led to a change in leadership with Thomas Ewing Jr., V.B. Horton and Charles Foster taking control (Taylor, 1972, p. 269). Despite the changes, the company went into receivership in 1876 and was reorganized as the Ohio Central Railway (Miller, 2007, p. 103). Over the next few years, the company would be

consolidated with the Sunday Creek Valley Railroad and purchased by another syndicate of wealthy investors from New York. Several Ohioans also invested in this new enterprise, including Governor Charles Foster. The new line was named the Ohio Central Railroad. The line direction was changed to Columbus, which opened up almost 50 miles of track. This new organization boasted a profit of over \$100,000 the first year (Taylor, 1970). By 1883, the towns of Corning, Rendville, Hemlock, and Buckingham joined others on the Ohio Central line. These were productive and prosperous towns, shipping 300 cars of coal daily (Colborn, 1883). After 1883, the company went into receivership again and was sold by court order two years later. Parts of the track, including the track north of Corning, were dissolved into the Toledo and Ohio Central Railroad (Miller, 2007). The legacy that the Ohio Central Railroad left behind was the creation of many of these small coal communities in southeastern Ohio.

The Little Cities of Black Diamonds

The Little Cities of Black Diamonds were a group of over 60 small towns and villages that were once part of the great “boom and bust” era of industrialization and coal mining in the Hocking Valley. In the late nineteenth century, many of these towns were large and prosperous business centers. Rendville and Corning, located only one mile apart, were estimated to have a combined total of more than 4,000 residents at their peaks in 1882 (Tribe, 1986).

These towns and villages of the Hocking Valley coalfields had coal economy in common, but there were significant differences with regard to ethnicity and nativity. For example, Corning contained a large number of German immigrants, Shawnee had a large

Welsh population, and Moxahala had a high percentage of Irish-born residents.

Rendville was distinctive in that it contained a large number of African Americans, more so than any of the other Hocking Valley coal towns (Tribe, 1989).

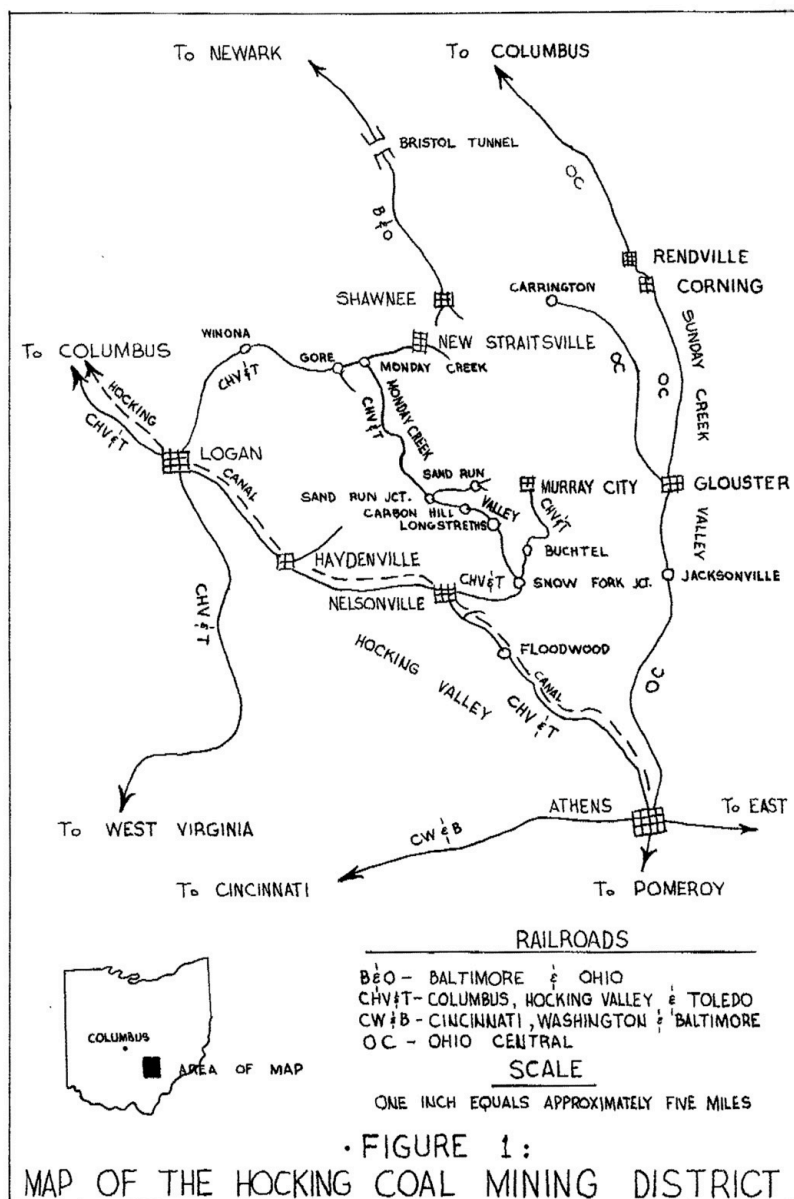


Figure 3.1. Map of the Hocking Valley Coal Mining District reprinted from John

William Lozier's 1963 thesis "The Hocking Valley Coal Miner's Strike, 1884-1885."

Rendville and the “Great Vein”

Rendville is located within the congressional township of Monroe in Perry County, Ohio. This county is one of the oldest in the state, its first white settlers arriving in 1804. Although one of Ohio’s smallest counties, it had a population of over 20,000 by 1860 (Hillis, 1909). “The Great Vein” also known as “The Nelsonville Vein” was a vein of coal that ran through the Hocking Valley coalfields to the Monday Creek and Sunday Creek Valleys (Colborn, 1883). The coal varied in thickness from six to 13 feet, with its thickest part located near Rendville. Almost all of Monroe Township was located within the “Great Vein.” The bituminous coal in this area was prized, not only for its quality, but its accessibility because it lay only a few feet below the surface. Mining here could be done with the use “horizontal drifts” without the expense of “sinking shafts and operating hoists” (Lozier, 1963, p. 3). The coal fields in the Hocking Valley are a small part of “the bituminous coal region” of America, of which 10,000 square miles are located in Ohio (Graham, 1881, p. 141).



Figure 3.2. Rendville was located in the “Great Vein,” a seam of thick, high quality coal, which was easily accessible for mining. Reprinted from *The Lower Sunday Creek Valley*.

The Construction of Rendville

Rendville was founded in 1879 as a product of two interest groups, the Ohio Central Coal Company and William P. Rend, a Chicago industrialist. The Ohio Central Coal Company (OCCC) was part of Ohio Central Railroad and managed by Samuel Thomas and E.C. Lemert. By 1881, the OCCC had built around 300 company houses in Corning and Rendville, and a company store in each town (Tribe, 1986).

Rend, an experienced coal operator, had been part owner in a number of mines in Pennsylvania and Ohio. He worked in cooperation with Major Thomas J. Smith, a New Lexington grocer, who had purchased property in the area with intentions of selling lots

for homes and businesses (Nelson, 1996). Rend also leased land from the OCCC where he constructed additional homes and mines (Tribe, 1986).

Rendville was not solely a company town. The effect of this conglomerate of private home ownership, independent businesses, leased land and OCCC-owned land created a situation where Rendville was only partially a company town (Nelson, 1996). This stood in contrast to the neighboring town of Congo, whose company was said to have strict control over its employees (Tribe, 1986).

Construction in Rendville continued at a furious pace. Several times a month, the Rendville column in *The New Lexington Tribune* reported on new construction and business enterprises. From March 25, 1880, to August 26, 1880, the paper noted development of a grocery store, a meat market (“Rendville is Improving,” 1880), a boarding house, Sheppard and Dupler’s store and a shoe store (“Business is Lively,” 1880). Other mentions included an Odd Fellows hall, a 16-room hotel, a lumberyard (“From Morning Until Night,” 1880), a company store (“Coal Business Dull,” 1880), and a bakery owned by Robert Brown (“Improvement Still the Order,” 1880). The paper also noted that a gristmill and Dr. McTague and Priest’s drug store was under construction by the summer of 1880 (“The Bloodless War,” 1880).

Two years later, private-owned business construction continued in Rendville. In 1882, *The New Lexington Tribune* noted businesses on Main Street included Mr. P. Newton’s grocery store, Tinker and Yaker’s clothing store and an undertaker’s business owned by Ezra Rickets and Phil Ren (“Work at Most of the Mines,” 1882). The cornerstone of Rendville, the town hall and “calaboose,” was constructed in 1882 and

subsequently demolished in a fire in 1901. It was rebuilt a few years later in a style similar to the original (Tribe, 1977).

In August of 1882, an unprecedented flood damaged many of the businesses in Rendville. *The New Lexington Tribune* noted that “every bridge, county [sic] and railroad, was washed out between Moxahala and Corning.” As the mines flooded, coal cars, tracks, and machinery were strewn about and lifted downstream. In Rendville, five homes broke apart and were washed downstream. The Sunday Creek Store as well as Sheppard’s store, received about one thousand dollars in damage. Clifford’s saloon “went to pieces on the railroad bridge, carrying the bridge with it” (“On Thursday Afternoon,” 1880).

By 1883, Rendville boasted a post office, a hotel, a company store, seven saloons and a boardinghouse described as “Bachelor’s Hall.” Two church buildings and a school were also completed (Nelson, 1996). Entrepreneurship continued throughout the 1880s and 1890s. New businesses included a skating rink, (“The Result of the Revivals, 1885”) an ice cream parlor, and numerous restaurants (“Conference Resolutions,” 1892).

Rendville had a thriving saloon business and by early 1882 there were nineteen saloons in town (Tribe, 1977). Many residents attributed law breaking and “rowdy” activity to the saloon business (“The Mines of the Valley,” 1882). For a brief time in March of 1881, Rendville and Corning were consolidated. Citizens hoped that consolidation would lead to better policing and less “rowdiness,” particularly on Sundays, which were the busiest saloon days (Tribe, 1977). The consolidation did not work out, however, and on August 10, 1882, Rendville was incorporated as its own

entity. The first elections were held and John Q. Rathburn was elected as the first mayor (Tribe, 1977).



Figure 3.3. Main Street in Rendville, Ohio, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of Little Cities of Black Diamonds Archive, 2011.

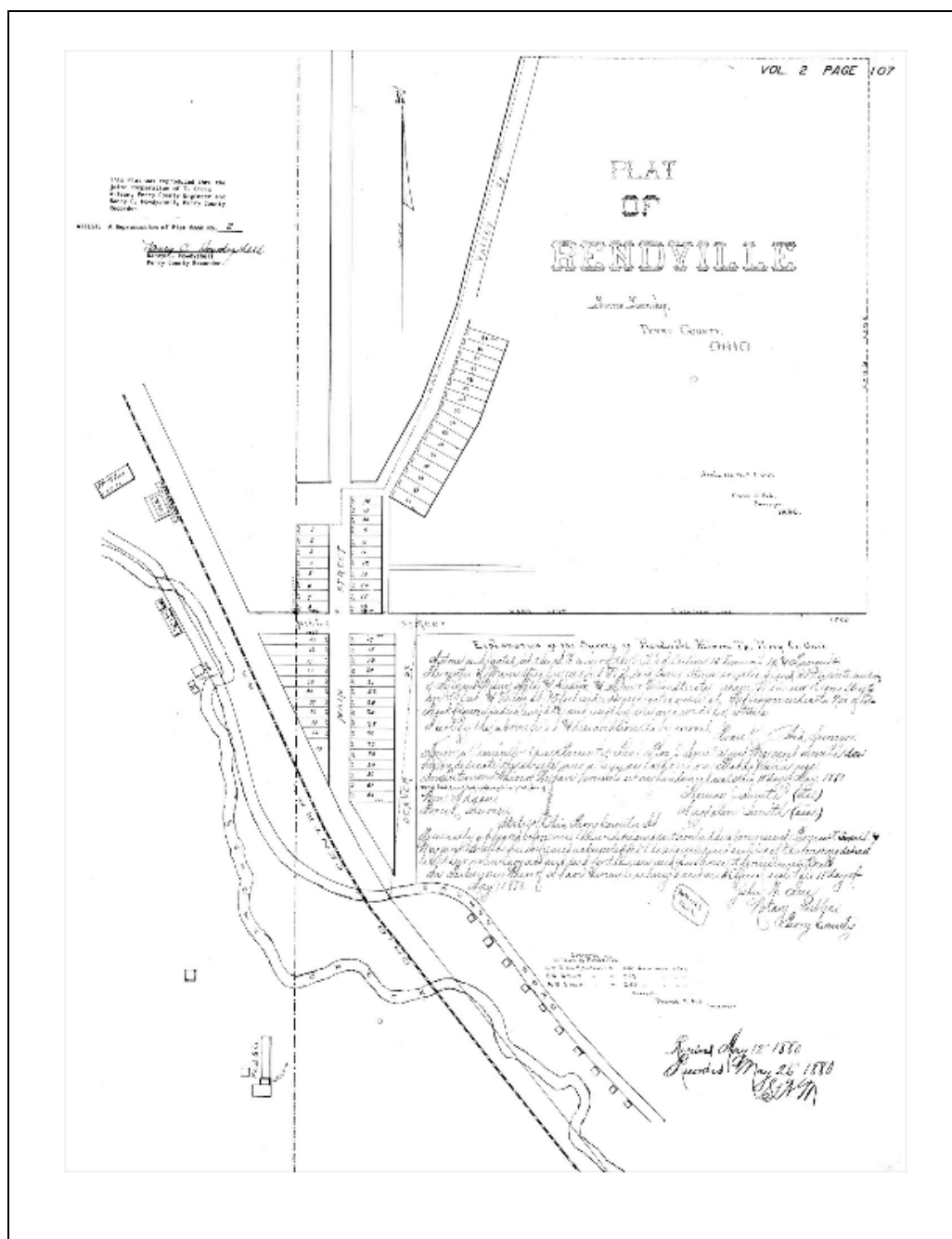


Figure 3.4. An 1880 plat map of Rendville displays the town layout. Map courtesy of the Perry County (Ohio) Engineers Office, Map Department. 2010.

Rendville, like most of the coal towns in the Hocking Valley, sprang up virtually overnight. Boarding houses, miner's homes, and businesses were constructed at an amazing speed. Despite the quick construction, however, Rendville was considered an attractive town. In the *History of Perry County*, author Ephraim Colborn (1883) describes the early days of the town:

Rendville is situated in the narrow valley of the east branch of Sunday Creek, and upon the slopes, hills and ridges, on either side. The Company houses are mostly built in rows, but more to suit the ground, than upon parallel or corresponding lines. The houses in the same row are usually alike; but the houses in different rows are of different size, shape and color, and this seems to give an agreeable and picturesque appearance to all, when viewed together (p. 222).



Figure 3.5. The company store in Rendville, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Archive, 2011.

Rendville as a Company Town

Rendville was only partially a company town, as the lower half of the town was owned and managed by the Ohio Central Coal Company (OCCC) and the upper half leased and operated by William P. Rend. In the towns of Corning and Rendville, located one mile apart, there were eight operating mines. Three were in Corning, three in Rendville and two located in-between. Six of the mines were owned by the OCCC, who also operated company stores in Corning, Rendville, Buckingham and Hamburg (Nelson, 1996). The OCCC operated these company stores until 1882, when the company changed its policy on store ownership and subsequently sold them to private owners (Tribe, 1977). It also leased around 300 company houses in each town and built a number of private

residences and businesses as well (Tribe, 1977). As was the case in many company towns, the Ohio Central Coal Company constructed rooming houses and hotels on their property for employees. The OCCC custom was to offer one half of the financing of churches and schools within each district. Two African-American churches and a large school in Rendville were built in this manner ("The Sunday Creek Valley," 1882).

One difference between the OCCC-owned property and William Rend's property was company policy on saloons. The OCCC prohibited saloons on their property and as a result all of the saloons in Rendville were in the upper part, or Rend's side of town (Tribe, 1986). Saloons, in part, were considered responsible for much of the lawbreaking and crime in Rendville. Although the town's population included families, there were a lot of single, young men who were fond of drinking and gambling. Tribe (1977) noted that from 1895 to 1898, Rendville mayors tried 143 court cases. Shawnee, in comparison, had almost the same number of court cases. However, its population was three times that of Rendville. There were more serious crimes in the town as well, including murders, mob violence and lynching. These incidents, however, did not seem to be racial in nature. Prostitution was rumored as well. *The New Lexington Tribune* reported on November 02, 1882, that "The "City Hotel" has acquired a bad reputation; although the outer door swings invitingly open all day; nobody has applied for lodging for some days" ("Items of Interest Scarce," 1882).



Figure 3.6. Although there were no references to the use of company scrip, or money that could only be used in OCCC company stores, it was manufactured by the OCCC and signed by supervisor W.C. Lemert in the 1880s. Reprinted from Allen's Collectible's and Gifts (www.allensinc.com).

Segregation in Rendville

As it was the only all African-American mine in the Hocking Valley, Mine Number Three in Rendville was unmistakably segregated. Union organizer Richard Davis vehemently opposed mine segregation in Rendville and believed it was detrimental to the unity of the workforce (McCormick, 1978). The policy for Mine Number Three was changed in the mid-1880s with the introduction of white miners into the mine (Gutman, 1976).

Rendville was never officially segregated with regard to housing, business or education. From the beginning, African-American owned businesses and white businesses both catered to and were frequented by all races. The first schools were constructed and established as integrated in 1882. Socially however, there were separate churches as well as social organizations and activities. But over time, the town evolved from a socially segregated society to one that was fully integrated. By the middle of the 1880s, social activities such as picnics and celebrations, as well as church services, were interracial. However, other activities such as dancing and ice-skating remained largely segregated (Nelson, 1996).

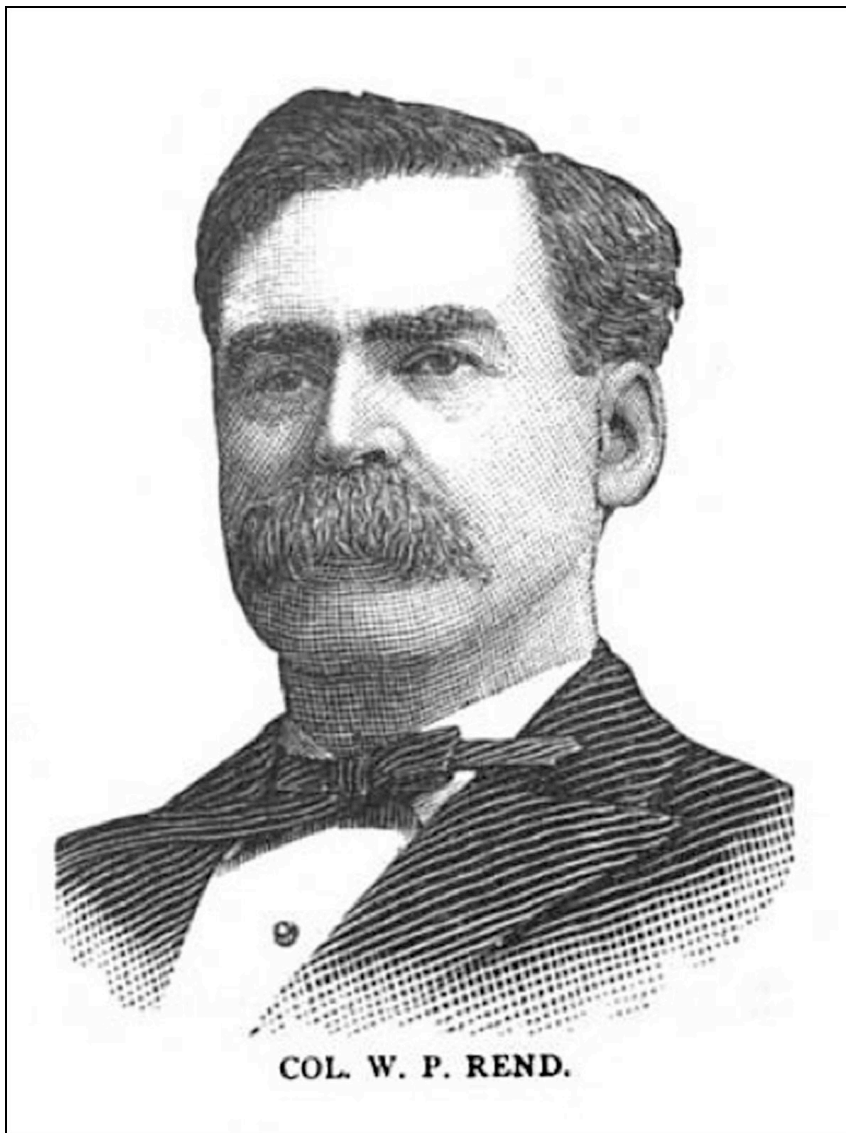


Figure 3.7. Colonel William P. Rend. Image reprinted from *Gladstone-Parnell and the Great Irish Struggle*. 1886.

Colonel William P. Rend

Coal towns such as Rendville operated in line with the structure imposed by the coal operator or syndicate. William Rend was a different type of coal operator as he often broke ranks with large industrialists and advocated for the working class.

Background

William Patrick Rend was born in 1840 in County Leitrim, Ireland. In 1847, his parents migrated to the United States and settled in Lowell, Massachusetts. Rend spent his early years there and graduated from Lowell High School. He began his career as a teacher in New Brooklyn, New Jersey, and taught in Anne Arundel County, Maryland. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he joined the Fourteenth New York Volunteers and fought at the Second Battle of Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg and the Siege of Yorktown. Honorably discharged in 1863, he continued his military career with the Illinois National Guard where he received the title of lieutenant colonel. Rend married Elizabeth Barry of Lowell, with whom he had ten children. After the war, the Rends moved to Chicago where they became popular in business and social circles (Ffrench, 1897).

After working a variety of jobs in Chicago's rail and freight industry, he began a successful freight business and built his own team of cars. Turning to the coal industry, Rend and his partner, Edwin Walker, a corporate attorney, invested in a number of mines in Pennsylvania and Ohio. By 1885, Rend owned three large anthracite mines and had half interest in two others in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. He also was invested in a number of oil wells in Pennsylvania. In Ohio, he owned two mines in Rendville and had interests in two others in Jacksonville and New Straitsville. Altogether, the W.P. Rend Company employed 2,000 men, owned 1,750 freight cars and produced one million tons of coal per year (Ffrench, 1897).

Rend City

In 1902, Rend sold all of his properties in Ohio and Pennsylvania to the Continental Coal Company for \$750,000. He then invested in a new mining enterprise in Southern Illinois. He purchased an existing mine in 1907 and established Rend City in 1908 (Franklin County Historical Society, 1912). Rend died in 1915, but the W.P. Rend & Co. operated this mine until 1920 (Franklin County Historical Society, 1996).

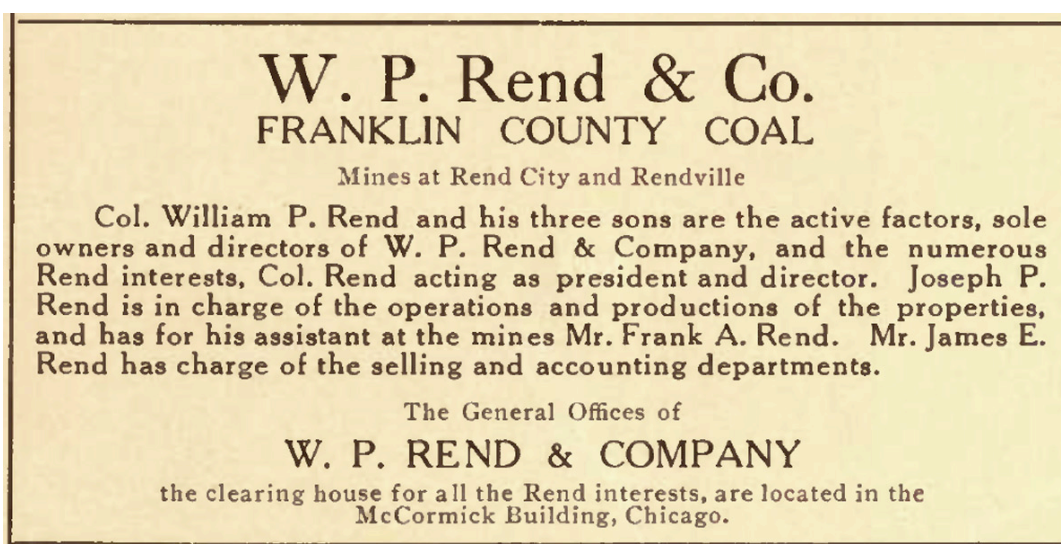


Figure 3.8. Advertisement for the W.P. Rend & Company in Rend City, Illinois, reprinted from *Franklin County, Illinois, and its Development, 1912*.

Rend's Battles with the Syndicate

Rend often empathized with laborers and felt more connected with the workingman than with industrial capitalists. In an 1880 speech to the North Chicago Rolling Mill Company, he identified with the laboring class and stated “I have always felt proud that I myself commenced the struggle in life in the common ranks of labor... I feel

therefore, that with the laboring classes I can enter into the views, the feelings and the sympathies of the “honest sons of toil” (Rend, 1880, p.1).

Among coal operators, Rend was considered a renegade. Large coal companies dominated southeastern Ohio and there were few independent operators. McCormick (1978) described Rend as “an entrepreneur [who] would fight the growth of corporate power and would champion the cause of the small businessman and coal miners” (p. 19). Rend was outspoken in his opinions about the coal syndicate, and often painted himself as an independent businessman against corporate monopolies. In 1885, he testified to the Ohio Legislature regarding the 1884-85 strike in the Hocking Valley. He described these syndicates as “men who have never done any work... they don’t understand the feelings, opinions and sentiments of the laboring classes” (McCormick, 1978, p. 20).

During this labor strike, Rend had sympathized with miners and refused to lower wages recommended by the syndicate. Coal operators in the Hocking Valley had reduced coal miners’ wages from 70 cents a ton to 60 cents and then down to 50 cents. The operators also asked miners to sign an “iron clad” contract, promising not to join a union. Almost all of the operators insisted on this new agreement except for Rend and John Buchtel. Rend continued to pay 70 cents per ton, which greatly angered the syndicate. During the nine-month strike, Rend’s mine in Rendville was the only one operating in the Hocking Valley (General Assembly, 1885). During the strike, the Thomas Syndicate, part of the Columbus and Hocking Railroad, refused to supply him with cars for coal transport. In return, he filed suit against the railroad, settled out of court, and won the right to have coal cars provided to his mines (McCormick, 1978).

Rend as an Arbitrator

Rend was best known as an advocate of arbitration between miners and coal operators. Rend and labor organizer Chris Evans took the lead in creating coal industry arbitration boards and joint meetings after the 1884-85 Hocking Valley Strike. This signified the first time that miners and operators worked together to settle differences on wages and working conditions (Tribe, 1989). After the strike, a series of joint conferences were held in Pittsburgh, Chicago, Illinois and Columbus. During the fourth conference in Indianapolis on March 12, 1889, Rend pleaded with operators and miners not to separate but to cooperate. He stated:

It is not for the interest alone of the miners that a settlement should be reached...

It is for the interest of both. It is for the interest of the great principle of conciliation that, for the first time, I believe, in the industrial history of the country, has been given effect to by the miners and operators. It is apparent that this question has got to be settled by one of two methods. We have got to employ one of two agencies: the agency of force or reason. Gentlemen, which shall we employ? Shall we resort to brutal strikes and lock-outs again? Is that your wish? Is it the wish of any operator here to go back to the old system; to the old plan of fighting the miners, the plan that entails loss of capital, the plan which brings with it oftentimes scenes of bloodshed and disorder to the State, and which engenders feelings of enmity and hatred between capital and labor? I do not believe that you want to go back to the old system. The other system is that of reason and intelligence, of using the highest faculty that God Almighty has given us (Lloyd, 1890, p. 206-207).

Rend on Race and Tolerance

While Rend's hiring practices did not provide evidence that he was a proponent of integration, many of his speeches and interviews often pointed to tolerance regarding African Americans. In 1880, *The New Lexington Tribune* published an interview with Rend regarding his conversion from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. He noted that previous to 1880, he had always voted with the Irishmen in the country on the Democratic ticket. However, his conversion to the Republican Party was in part influenced by the fact that they were the "party of freedom and progress; [the party] enfranchised a downtrodden race; it preserved the union..." He explained that his experience living in the South had altered his viewpoints on slavery.

My views underwent a radical change, and I was convinced that slavery was an evil of the greatest magnitude, and that its horrors had not in the least been overdrawn. When the war broke out I regarded the occurrence as a visitation from above to punish the country for the terrible crime it had committed against an inoffensive and a suffering race ("Still They Come," 1880).

Rend's Hiring Practices

Like many coal operators, Rend recruited and hired a large number of foreign laborers. In 1880, Rendville had the highest percentage of foreign workers in the Hocking Valley (Tribe, 1986). Rend was involved in much of the hiring and relocation of the foreign workers. *The Albany Echo* reported on July 15, 1880, that Rend personally led a

“party of fifty miners from England, Ireland, and Germany” to the Sunday Creek mines (“The Ohio Central Mining Company,” 1880).

In all of Rend’s vast operations, Mine Number Three in Rendville was the only all African-American mine. The population in Jacksonville, Ohio, was only 1.8 % African-American (Tribe, 1986). In Rend City, no evidence was found that any African Americans were hired as miners. The 1910 federal manuscript census of Browning Township, Illinois, recorded the majority of residents as native Illinoisans and 100 % white. However, there was a modest population of Bohemian, Italian, Austrian and Russian miners represented (Browning, U.S. Census, 1910).

The Paradox of Rend

Rend was a devout Irish Catholic and supporter of the nationwide temperance movement. In the 1880s he funded the entire expense for the Reverend Joseph B. Cotter, who later became Bishop Cotter of Winona, (Minnesota), to “preach a temperance crusade through Ohio and Indiana, the result of which was that 17,000 names were added to the total abstinence pledge in three months” (Gladstone, 1886). However, in Rendville, the Ohio Central Coal Company did not allow saloons on their property and all nineteen saloons were located in the upper part of town, owned by Rend (Tribe, 1986).

Rend also disapproved of the use of company stores and did not operate one in Rendville. During the Hocking Valley Proceedings in 1885, he advised the Ohio legislature to eliminate them from the coal business. During the meeting he stated, “As an operator, I would like to see the company stores eliminated” (Proceedings, 1885, p. 18).

However, years later he established and operated a company store in Rend City, Illinois (Franklin County Historical Society, 1996).

Rend also spoke out against corporate monopolies and syndicates. During the Hocking Valley Proceedings in 1885, he stated, “Today the greatest evil that threatens labor and that threatens the stability of our government is the unbridled license that is enjoyed by our corporate monopolies” (General Assembly, 1885, p. 18). Yet in 1895 he was part of a consolidation with four other organizations to create the Ohio Central Fuel Company. *The Maysville (KY) Evening Bulletin* on February 6, 1895, reported, “this new concern will control the entire output of the coal lands on the Ohio Central Railroad” (“New Coal Combine,” 1895).

After many years as an independent operator, Rend sold his mining operations in Ohio and Pennsylvania to a corporate monopoly. On April 19, 1902, *The New York Times* reported that the Continental Coal Company of Pittsburgh “completed negotiations for the purchase of the large holdings of W. P. Rend and Co. of Chicago, the largest independent operator in the Hocking Valley.” The article noted that the sale “centres the control of all the important mining properties of the State in the hands of the three big combines-the Continental, the Pittsburg Coal Company, and the Sunday Creek Coal Company” (“Continental Coal Co. Deal,” 1902).

Rend died in Chicago on November 30, 1915. The obituary headline in the *Chicago Tribune* stated, “William P. Rend, Coal Pioneer, passes away. Millionaire President of Fuel Company dies at the age of 75” (“William P. Rend, Coal Pioneer,” 1915).

The Ohio Central Coal Company

The other coal operator in Rendville, the Ohio Central Railroad and Coal Company, progressed through many phases, beginning in 1869 with the formation of the Atlantic and Lake Erie Railroad. At the time of its demise in 1886, the company had gone through multiple owners along with several receiverships and consolidations (Taylor, 1972). In 1879, the year Rendville was founded, a New York syndicate was the majority owner of the company. Other investors included Governor Charles Foster of Ohio. In 1886 the company, under foreclosure, was sold by court order and “was partitioned and passed out of existence” (Taylor, 1970, p. 284).

Even with such a short lifespan, the Ohio Central Coal Company left a lasting impression. The company produced almost one fourth of the coal production in the Hocking Valley and was a major financial provider, employing an estimated 1,200 miners (Lozier, 1963). Their hiring practices left a permanent mark on the cultural landscape of the Hocking Valley as African-American and German miners settled and persisted in the area (“The Sunday Creek Valley,” 1882).

OCCC-Owned Mines

From its large two-story office on Corning’s Main Street, the Ohio Central Coal Company operated at least eight mines in the vicinity of Rendville and Corning. The mines were distinguished by odd and even numbers. Odd numbered mines were shaft openings that operated in the “big vein coal,” whereas even numbered mines were drift openings operating in veins of coal four to six feet in depth (“The Sunday Creek Valley,” 1882). OCCC-owned mines included Mine Number One, north of Rendville, Number

Two and Number Three, which were all African-American. Number Five and Number Nine were owned by the OCCC but leased by William Rend. OCCC also owned the Number 11 and Number 13 mines in Corning. The latter mines employed a total of 285 native-born white miners. German workers were dispersed among OCCC-owned mines Number 12, 15, and 19 (“The Sunday Creek Valley,” 1882).

The Infrastructure of Rendville; W.C. Lemert

In Rendville, the infrastructure and early foundations of ethnicity and community building can be attributed not only to William P. Rend, but OCCC supervisor Wilson (W.C.) Lemert.

Although Lemert shared the title of supervisor of the OCCC with Samuel Thomas, Lemert was in charge of day-to-day business affairs and decisions. Lemert was a successful businessman and investor. In *The History of the Republican Party in Ohio*, he was noted as “a man of seemingly limitless capacity and ability for business and has probably been connected with more enterprises that have promoted the material welfare of the state than any other one man” (Smith, 1898, p. 470).

Like William P. Rend, he was a veteran of the Civil War and earned the rank of Colonel while serving in the Eighty-Sixth Ohio Volunteer Infantry after the war. Before he became supervisor of the Ohio Central Coal Company, Lemert was actively involved in a variety of industrial trades, including cotton, wagon construction, iron furnaces and railroad companies. He was appointed manager of the Ohio Central Coal Railway and Coal Company in 1880. During his time with the OCCC, he invested in horse ranches,

natural gas production, and brick factories. He was active in regional business and social activities and served as postmaster of Bucyrus from 1886-1887 (Smith, 1898).



Figure 3.9. Wilson C. Lemert was a leading force in the creation of Rendville. Reprinted from *History of the Republican Party in Ohio*. 1898.

Lemert's Hiring Practices

In an interview with the *Toledo Sunday Journal*, Lemert noted that the OCCC was “seen abroad as being after cheap labor” because of their hiring practices of Germans and African Americans. Lemert disputed this, however, and noted that new miners were paid

the same rates as the preceding native miners ("The Sunday Creek Valley," 1882). The reporter noted that the OCCC had "no fight against organizations, color or creed. What they want is to get a ton of coal out when it is wanted, so they can sell it for a little more than is paid for it. Any man who wants work, and is willing to work, is welcome to go into their mines and work any day" ("The Sunday Creek Valley," 1882).

In 1880, *The New Lexington Tribune* noted that around twenty African-American miners were working at Mine Number Three "on the basis that the OCCC adopt it" as their mine ("The Bloodless War," 1880). This seemed to have been the case, as Mine Number Three remained an all-African-American mine, the only one in the Hocking Valley, until the mid-1880s (Gutman, 1976). *The Toledo Sunday Journal*, in an extensive review of the towns of Corning and Rendville in 1882, noted the largest numbers of African-American miners were employed in Mines Number Two and Number Three with a total of 180 miners. Both mines had white supervisors ("The Sunday Creek Valley," 1882). The OCCC also recruited a large number of German miners. In 1881, 300 German miners and their families, in total around 600 people, were sent by train to Corning, Buckingham, Borbec, and Hamburg (Tribe, 1986). White native-born miners were also represented in the Corning mines, filling Mines Number 11 and 13 ("The Sunday Creek Valley," 1882).

Church and School Construction

The OCCC was also instrumental in the creation of Rendville's social infrastructure. As company policy dictated, the OCCC offered to pay half of any church construction costs and agreed to "give each district the sum of \$2,000 for the purpose of

building school houses” (“Work on the Railroad,” 1880). In 1882, *The Toledo Sunday Journal* reported:

The [OCCC] are very liberal in donations. To any denomination wishing to build a church to worship in they will donate dollar for dollar for money collected. The colored people have already taken advantage of this and built two neat churches at Rendville and two are almost completed in Corning. Two large schoolhouses have been built, one in Corning and one at Rendville. The company donated half the funds for each (“The Sunday Creek Valley,” 1882).

In 1882, G.G. Hadley replaced Lemert, who had been popular among the miners *The New Lexington Tribune* noted it was "unanimous among miners that the OCCC made a mistake in changing management" (“Work in the Mines,” 1882). Despite the short time that Lemert managed the Ohio Central Coal Company, he was influential in the social structure as well as the physical formation of Rendville and its distinctive demographic profile.

CHAPTER 4: A DISTINCTIVE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Fraternal Orders in Rendville

Rendville hosted a number of fraternal orders, both white and African American, including The Odd Fellows, The Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons, Knights of Pythias, Knights of the Wisemen and the Sons of St. George (Nelson, 1996). Tribe (1977) also noted an Ancient Order of Hibernians, an order usually reserved for Irish Catholics. The Grand United Order of Odd Fellows, Mineral Lodge 2220, was an African-American order, based in Rendville. The fraternity was established in 1881 and held parades at Thanksgiving as well as other holidays. Two other African-American Odd Fellows lodges existed in the Hocking Valley; one in Nelsonville and another in Glouster (Tribe, 1977).

Prominent and active members of the African-American order of Odd Fellows in Rendville included Mayor Samuel B. Allen, who served as both a district treasurer and grand treasurer ("Odd Fellows Department," 1890), Dr. Isaiah Tuppins, who served as grandmaster of the Ohio district lodge ("Odd Fellows Department," 1884), and Reverend N.S. Merritt, pastor of the First Baptist Church (Hillis, 1909). The order was mentioned not only in the African-American newspapers but also locally. On March 9, 1882, *The New Lexington Tribune* reported that the "Colored Odd Fellows" held a parade followed by a sermon at the Baptist Church to celebrate their first anniversary ("The Mines In This Valley," 1882).

Another African-American order popular in the late nineteenth century was the Knights of Pythias. The organization in Rendville, K.O.P, Attucks Lodge, also attracted

local business and religious leaders. Members included J.L. (Sandy) Jones (“Mrs Cavender and Mrs White,” 1892), Mayor Aaron T. Reed, and Reverend N.S. Merritt, who was also a member of the Odd Fellows (Hillis, 1909).

In 1882, a new mutual insurance company, Knights of the Wise Men, was organized in Rendville. The New Lexington Tribune noted, “Members are assessed 50 cents upon the death of a member. Heirs of the deceased received \$1000” (“Work At The Mines Not Improved,” 1882).

Rendville’s African-American Churches

Nelson (1996) noted five protestant churches, both African American and white, in Rendville by 1884. Churches played a vital role in Rendville’s community by hosting Sunday schools, picnics, parades and a number of religious and secular societies.

Two African-American churches, the First Baptist and the Methodist church, were built by 1882. Both were half financed by the Ohio Central Coal Company, and were said to be “neat, [and] similar in appearance” (Colborn, 1883, p. 224). The pastor of the First Baptist Church was Reverend Patrick H. Williams in 1882, followed by Reverend Tolliver and Reverend D. H. Hutston. Williams returned in 1886 to lead the church, which by then had 173 members. The longest serving pastor was Reverend N. S. Merritt, who had been pastor for 25 years beginning in the early 1900s (“Congregation Celebrates,” 1993). The pastors of the Methodist Church included Reverend King in 1886 (“Union Sunday-School Convention,” 1886) and Reverend Hammond, who baptized Adam Clayton Powell Sr. in the Sunday Creek during a mass baptism (Nelson, 1996). This event was reported as having over 1,000 spectators (“On Last Sabbath,” 1885).

The churches provided religious education and comfort but also served as facilities for other organizations. The Jacksonian Literary Club was held on Sunday afternoons at the Baptist church (“Union Sunday-School Convention,” 1886), while the Methodist Church provided literary exercises such as “old-fashioned” spelling bees (“A Telegraph Operator,” 1891). The Orpheus Club, a youth choir, was also organized through the Methodist church (“Once More we Appeal,” 1884).

Churches, although segregated congregationally, often participated in interracial events such as Sunday school picnics and holiday gatherings (“A Telegraph Operator,” 1891). The Union Sabbath-School Convention, which included all four Sabbath schools in Rendville as well as churches from neighboring towns, was an annual event. It began with a procession through Rendville and Corning, and ended in Millertown, where the convention was held. *The Cleveland Gazette* reported that the celebration “among the white and colored schools of the valley is just the thing. It brings the races together in one harmonious band” (“Dr. Tuppins Has Opened,” 1886).

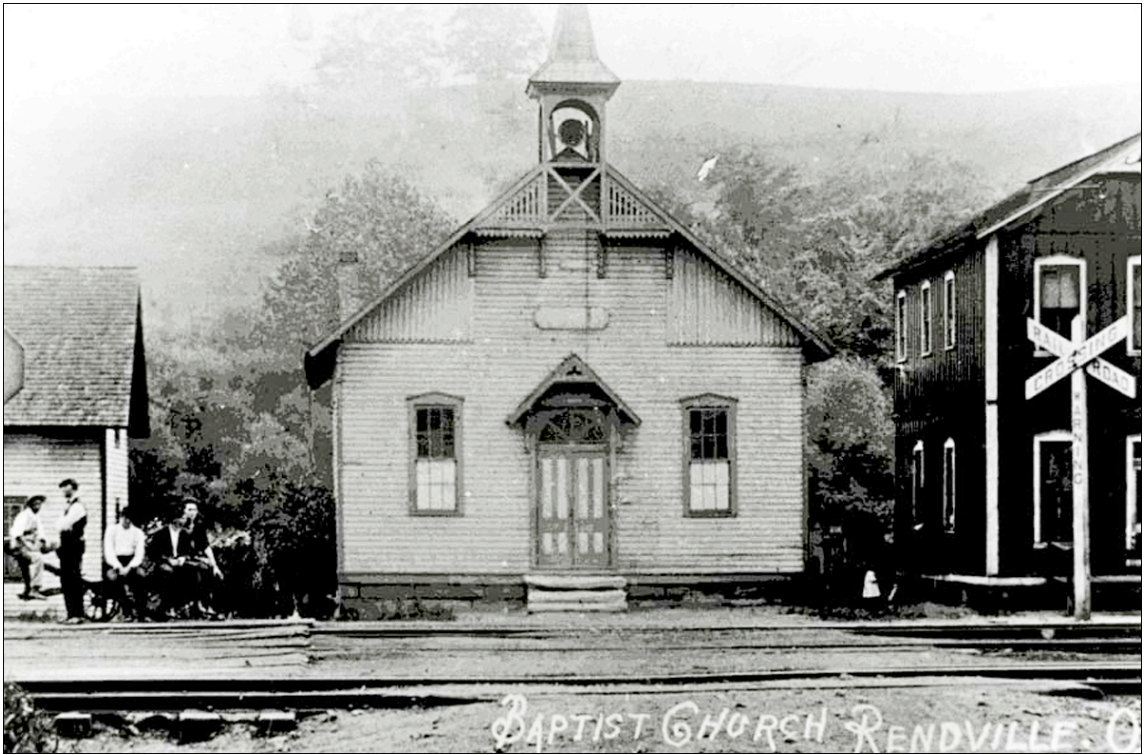


Figure 4.1. The Baptist Church of Rendville in its original location next to the railroad tracks, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Archive.



Figure 4.2. Reverend N.S. Merritt was the longest serving pastor of the First Baptist Church in Rendville. Reprinted from *The Book of Perry County*. 1883.



Figure 4.3. Adam Clayton Powell Sr. in his autobiography, *Against the Tide*, called Rendville “the most lawless and ungodly place I had ever seen” (Powell, 1939, p. 14).

Adam Clayton Powell Sr.

The most influential person to have come from the First Baptist Church in Rendville was the Reverend Adam Clayton Powell Sr. He was born in Franklin County, Virginia, on May 05, 1865, and his family moved to a farm in West Virginia ten years later. Powell (1939) wrote that as a teenager, he became involved in disreputable

activities. He stated that in West Virginia “men with bad morals, shooting and drinking and fighting were common” (p. 13). He felt that for his own safety “to keep from being lynched or murdered” he had to leave the state.

In August of 1884, he moved to Rendville, Ohio, where his distant relative, Henry Tolliver, was the proprietor of a saloon (Powell, 1939, p. 14). He said of Rendville, “It was a town worse than any in West Virginia, differing only in the fact that it was run and controlled by colored folk” (“Dr. Powell Celebrates,” 1935).

Powell described the character of Rendville and the town’s influence on his personal life as, “the most lawless and ungodly place I have ever seen. Every house on Main Street except the mayor’s office and the post office was used as a gambling place. He found a job in one of the mines owned by W.P. Rend and earned 80 dollars a month. He noted that most of it was spent on gambling (Powell, 1939, p.14).

Powell attributed his conversion to Christianity and the dramatic turn in his life to a religious experience in Rendville on Sunday, March 08, 1885. For two months, the Baptist and Methodist churches had held nightly prayer sessions. One Saturday evening, Powell noted that “the saloons and the gambling dens were deserted and people walked the streets in hushed silence... I passed more than a hundred people on the streets, and they all knew me but not a one spoke to me. Some of the strong men were crying.” The next Sunday morning, Powell and Henry Tolliver headed toward their gambling house, Tolliver’s saloon, the largest in town. Instead, they stopped at the Baptist church and witnessed Reverend Houston’s [sic] fall to the floor in “religious emotions.” Powell was deeply influenced by this and said, “it was the most effective sermon I have ever heard. Within five minutes, more than fifty persons in every part of the church joyfully accepted

Christ.” He noted the streets of downtown Rendville were filled with residents “seeking and finding the Lord.” The effect on the town was also remarkable. Powell noted:

The churches were kept open day and night until the following Saturday. The coalmines were shut down for a week, businesses of all kinds were suspended and the whole town, including Henry Tolliver and the author of this book, was converted to Christianity. That week I saw Mr. Tolliver and other saloonkeepers roll their liquor barrels into Main Street and empty them. I saw the gamblers gather their gambling apparatus and make a bonfire of it in the same street. In one week every saloon and gambling house disappeared. Five preachers came out of that revival and this writer was one of them (Powell, 1939, p. 16).

The following winter, he enrolled at Rendville Academy where he worked as a janitor in exchange for tuition. Powell noted that he was deeply encouraged by John L. (Sandy) Jones and Mayor Isaiah Tuppins, who had appointed him deputy marshal. He left Rendville four years later and attended theology school at Wayland Seminary and College in Washington, D.C. He became pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem in 1908. Under Powell’s leadership this church became one of the largest denominations in the United States and boasted a congregation of 14,000. His son, Adam Clayton Powell Jr., was the first African American elected to Congress in New York and became a controversial and influential leader in the civil rights movement. Powell Sr. died in 1953 at the age of 88 (Low, 1984).

Powell’s conversion in Rendville was related many times in publications and books. He continued to visit relatives, including his sister Mrs. William Tolliver, in

Rendville and was a guest preacher at the Baptist Church (“Mrs Cavender and Mrs White,” 1892).

The Rendville School

A Bucyrus contractor began construction of Rendville’s “four-room, two story brick school” in 1881 and finished it in 1882. The Perry County Board of Education failed to hire enough teachers and the opening date was delayed. However, the board eventually hired the required number of teachers, both African-American and white (Tribe, 1986). On November 02, 1882, *The New Lexington Tribune* reported that school in Rendville had begun two weeks earlier and that it was already crowded “having two hundred and fifty scholars in the four rooms.” The paper noted that the principal, Mr. Brown of Shawnee, would be working with three assistants (“Items of Interest Scarce, 1882). The following year, the *New Lexington Tribune* noted a new principal, J.E. Kintz of Somerset, and assistants Miss Sadie Broadis, Ella Addison and Alice Wigten (“The Miners in the Sunday Creek Valley,” 1883).

The exact date of school integration in Rendville is cloudy as much of the information that exists is contradictory. In 1886, *The Cleveland Gazette* reported, “F.B. Jones had been teaching in the [Rendville] *mixed schools* for nine months now” (Rev. P.H. Williams,” 1886). However, Douglas (1997) cited that Rendville was integrated following the repeal of the school segregation statute in 1887.



Figure 4.4. The Rendville Public School was established in the early 1880s. Image reprinted from http://www.oldohioschools.com/perry_county.htm, 2011.

Politics in Rendville

During the Gilded Age, politics and local political associations were popular pastimes. A branch of the Afro-American League was formed in Rendville in 1890 (Nelson, 1996). This national organization, founded by T. Thomas Fortune, editor of *The New York Age*, predated the NAACP. Thornbrough (1961) noted that this was the first civil rights organization formed to “secure equal civil and political rights” for African Americans. The group’s focus was on voting rights, anti-lynching laws, school funding inequalities, penitentiary reform, as well as transportation and accommodation rights (p. 494).

In Rendville political votes often ran contrary to those in the other Hocking Valley towns. Tribe (1977) noted that African Americans in Rendville usually voted for the Republican ticket while most of the surrounding towns voted Democratic.

Gerber (1976) noted that African Americans in the 1890s had gained considerable political influence. He suggested that this was more prevalent in smaller municipalities with higher percentages of African-American residents. He noted that the great political gains by African Americans in Rendville, was “a situation [that] existed which was without equal in contemporary Ohio” (p. 335).

These successes in local politics came as early as 1882, when Anthony Broadis was elected street commissioner, a position he would for at least 12 years (“Of Race Interest,” 1882). At various times, African Americans held the majority of public positions despite the almost equal number of whites in the town. On April 11, 1891, *The Cleveland Gazette* reported that “the white man’s party [had] received a complete knockout” with the election of Frank Matthews as mayor, Samuel Parks as treasurer, and Joseph Woods as marshal (“Re-elected Street Commissioner,” 1891).

Rendville was represented in even the smallest political positions outside the town as well. The only African-American page in the Ohio Assembly in 1902 was a young man from Rendville named Walter Penn Jr. Penn, a student in Rendville, also worked in the coalmines to support his family (“Our Only Page in the Ohio Assembly,” 1902).



Figure 4.5. *The Cleveland Gazette* published a story on April 26, 1902, about Walter Penn Jr. and his position as the only African-American page in the Ohio General Assembly ("Our Only Page in the Ohio Assembly," 1902).

Social Organizations and Events

Rendville residents had many opportunities to join clubs and organizations. The town hosted a number of musical bands including the Dodson Brass Band (“The Officers of the Newly Organized,” 1894), the Rendville Cornet Band (“Union Sunday-School Convention,” 1886), and a mandolin club (“Baseball Games Galore,” 1902), as well as choir and musical opportunities offered by the churches. Women’s society groups were organized as well. In 1894, the Ladies Valley Court was organized by a group of prominent women in town (“The Officers of the Newly Organized,” 1894).

Recreational activities and events, such as religious and fraternal activities, were often segregated. *The New Lexington Tribune* reported that Fourth of July festivities in 1882 included two dancing platforms, one for whites and one for African Americans (“The Mines at this Place,” 1882). *The Cleveland Gazette* on April 25, 1885, reported that a new skating rink had opened in Rendville with three nights reserved for whites and three for African Americans. The *Gazette* correspondent responded “As we think the whites almost as good as we, we feel sorry to see them insulted, so we will give them six nights in a week and stay at home ourselves” (“The Result of the Revivals,” 1885).

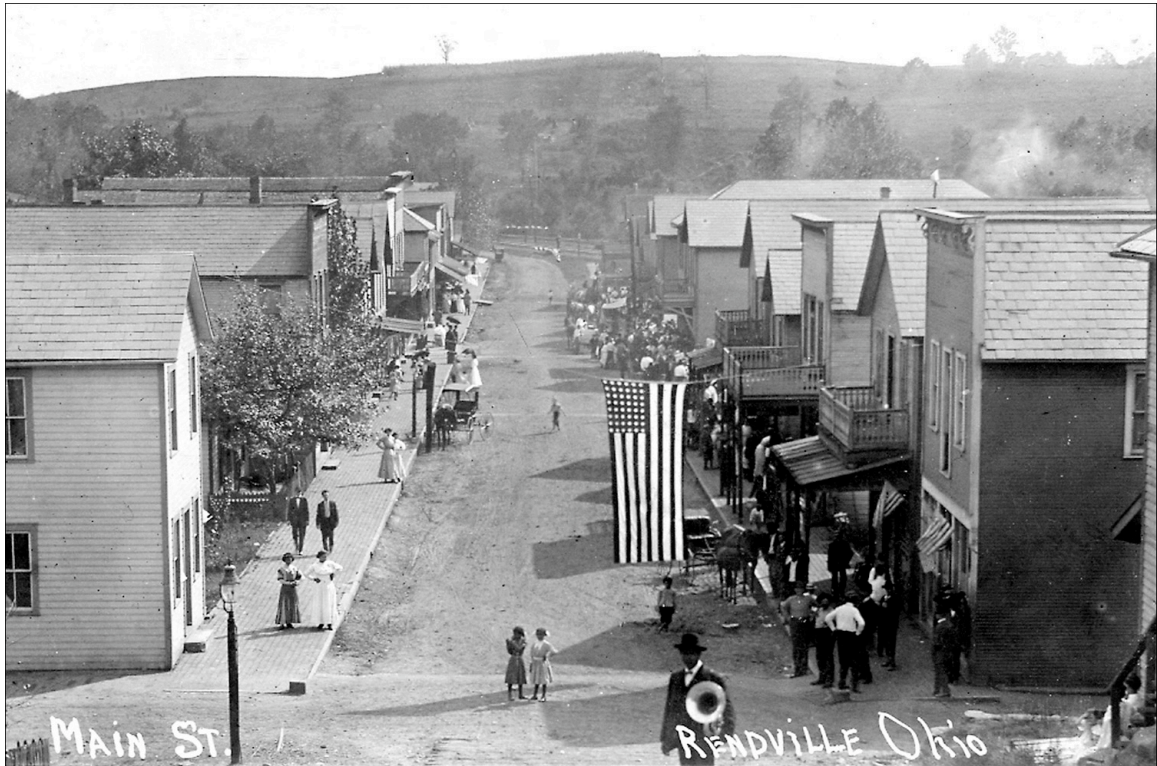


Figure 4.6. Emancipation Day was a popular event in Rendville and attended by both whites and African-Americans. Photograph from the early 1900s courtesy of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Archive, 2011.

African-American Businessmen in Rendville

Rendville attracted African-American entrepreneurs from other cities in Ohio as well as from out of state. Many of the town's leadership positions, including mayor, coroner, city council, marshal, and postmaster, were held by African Americans between 1880 and 1920. While many residents of neighboring towns still harbored negative feelings toward African-American growth in the region, others applauded the success of the town. Hillis (1909) wrote about the residents of Rendville, "Its people are thrifty,

enterprising and have made good citizens. Many of them have become merchants, doctors and preachers, and are demonstrating in a quiet way what education and environment may do for colored people” (p. 2).

Although there were numerous African-American business owners in Rendville, three were written about most often; Samuel Blaine Allen, J.L. Jones, and Isaiah Tuppins. These men all held municipal positions within the community as well as owned businesses in the town. All three came to Rendville, not with the intention of obtaining coal mining employment, but in search of a successful business career.

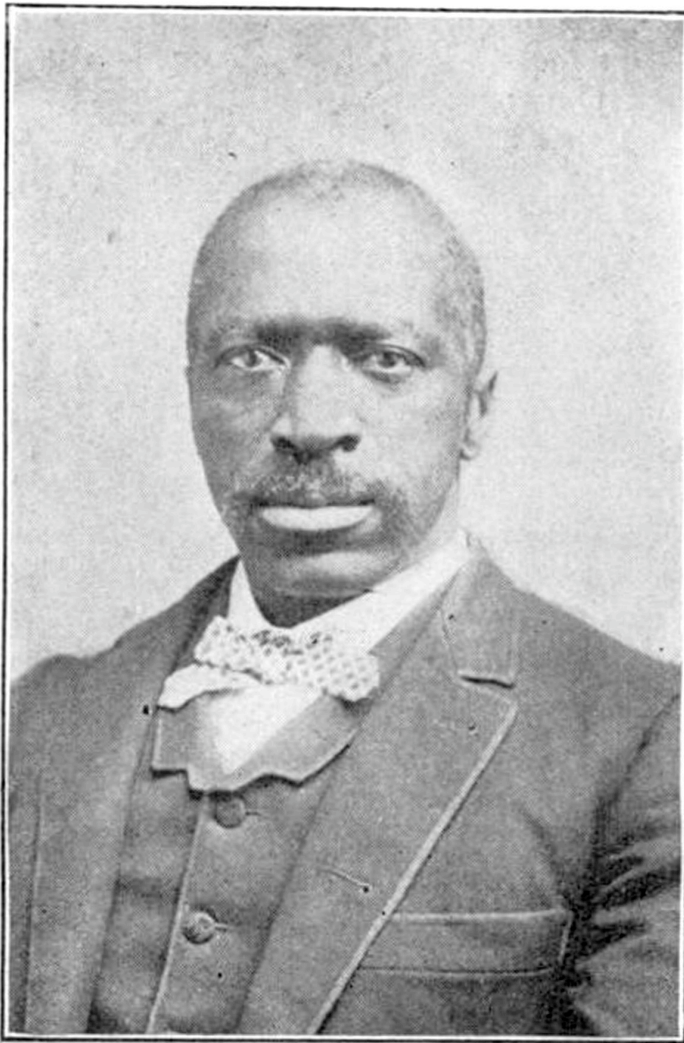


Figure 4.7. Samuel Blaine Allen, reprinted from The Crisis Magazine, October 10, 1915.

Samuel Blaine Allen

Samuel Blaine Allen was born into slavery in Lewisburg, Virginia, on October 26, 1842. From 1863 to 1880, he worked as a porter, barber, and steward in the steamboat industry along the Ohio River. In 1881 he moved his family to Rendville where he became proprietor of the Allen House, a hotel in downtown Rendville (“Hon. Samuel B. Allen,” 1892). Allen served nine years as a town councilman and was elected as the

town's second African-American mayor in 1891 (Tribe, 1986, p. 96). Continuing his business investments, he built a restaurant in Corning in 1893 and later retired to Middleport, Ohio, where he owned and managed another "Hotel Allen" ("A City Mayor," 1915).



Figure 4.8. J.L. (Sandy) Jones reprinted from The Book of Perry County.

J.L. (Sandy) Jones

John Lysandrous (Sandy) Jones authored *The History of the Jones Family* in the years 1928 to 1930. This genealogical book, reprinted in 2001, included a narration of Jones' business and professional endeavors in Rendville during the late nineteenth century.

Jones was born July 13, 1857, in Meigs County, Ohio. He moved to Rendville in 1881 hoping to secure a position as the first schoolteacher at Rendville's newly integrated school. His brother, Alex Jones, was already in Rendville working as a miner. He arrived too late, as Sadie Broadis, a young Columbus High School graduate, had already filled the position. Because he was unemployed he accepted a position as a trimmer in the mines. He soon organized a night school, which was held in the mine tipple. He stated it was held there "as there was no other place available." He then secured three students, which helped to increase his salary to "above average" (Jones, 2001, p. 27).

In Rendville, he was offered a half partnership in a grocery store with Mr. James Johnson. Jones stated that the grocery, although successful, "did not keep me busy, so I took a course in business by correspondence and a course in reading" (Jones, 2001, p. 28). Jones organized a miner's cooperative store in 1884. He stated, "over one half of the people of this town were Negroes and most of the business was in the hands of the white race. Rev. Hammond, Dr. I.S. Tuppins and I assembled some of our most progressive citizens and organized a Miner's cooperative store with capital limited to \$10,000" (Jones, 2001, p. 29). The store, which was located in the old Johnson and Jones store and building, became a great success. In 1887, Rendville's economy declined and many miners left town, leaving the future of the cooperative uncertain. The other owners sold

their shares to Jones, and he moved the business into a building on Main Street. Jones and his family lived upstairs and ran the new store, called John L. Jones Co., from the first level (Jones, 2001).

Jones wrote accounts of the store's success and noted that his customers were native-born whites, English, African Americans, and "foreigners from many places" (Jones, 2001, p. 46). He also described African-American political success in the town as well. He wrote, "In time the Negro population outnumbered the whites, and instead of taking everything as they could have done they divided the offices with their white brothers" (Jones, 2001, p. 46).

Jones was well respected in the town and served on many political committees. During a deep depression in the 1890s, Jones served as a delegate to petition Ohio's Governor William McKinley for miner's relief. His pleas to the governor were successful and a train was sent with provisions the next day (Jones, 2001). In 1896, he successfully ran for postmaster against George Tharpe, who was white. Jones noted that his supporters had "smashed the icons of prejudice" (Jones, 2001, p. 49).

Jones married Sadie Broadis in 1884. She was Rendville's first teacher and Perry County's first African-American teacher. When Sadie resigned, the position was filled by Flem Jones, John Jones' brother. When Flem Jones accepted an out-of-state position, Charley Jones, their younger brother, then filled the position (Jones, 2001).

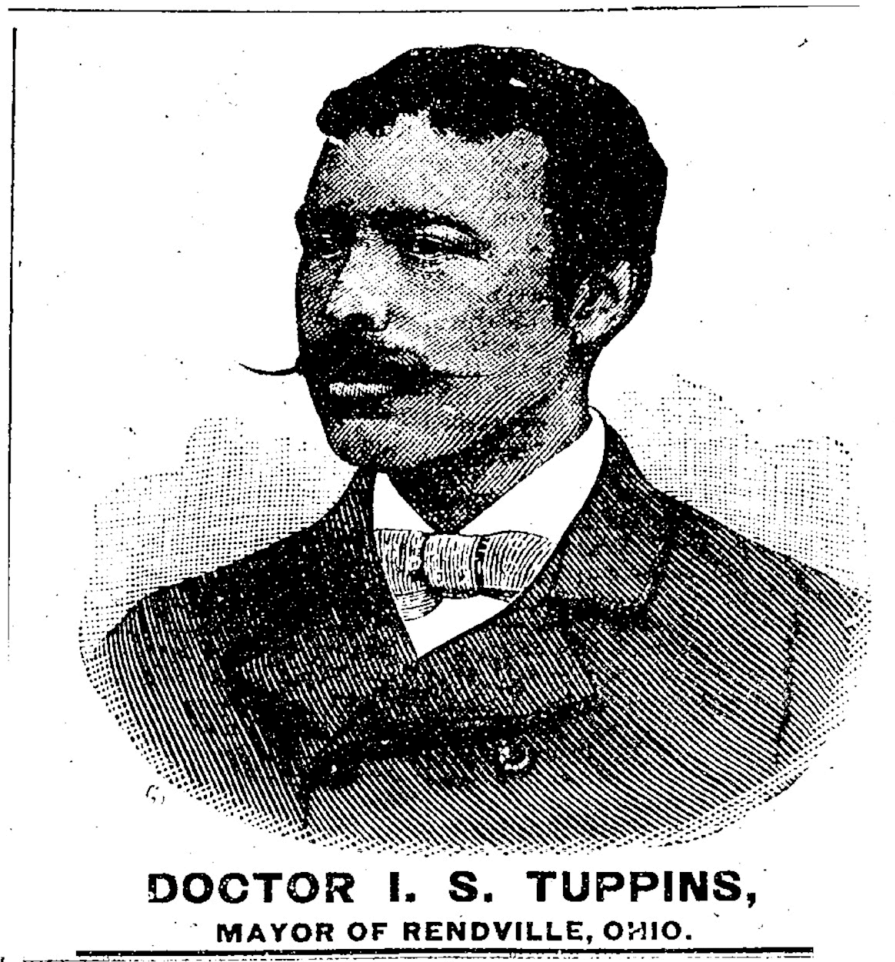


Figure 4.9. Doctor Isaiah Tuppins was the first African-American to graduate from a medical college in Ohio. Reprinted from *The Cleveland Gazette*, October 15, 1887.

Doctor Isaiah Tuppins

Dr. Isaiah Tuppins was elected the first African-American mayor in the north central United States in 1887 (Nelson, 1996). He was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1851 and grew up in Xenia, Ohio, where he attended the “colored school.” At 14, he moved to Franklin, Tennessee, where he taught school for three years (“I.S. Tuppins, M.D.,” 1884). He returned to Ohio in 1868 and settled in Columbus (“Death of Dr.

Tuppins,” 1889). Tuppins worked as a barber and became owner of the Civil Rights Barber Shop in Columbus as he saved money for medical school (“I.S. Tuppins, M.D.,” 1884). In the early 1880s, he entered Columbus Medical College and became the first African-American graduate of the school. He was also the first African American to graduate from a medical college in Ohio (“Death of Dr. Tuppins,” 1889). After graduation he moved his practice to Rendville, Ohio, where he also operated a small drugstore (“Dr. Tuppins Has Opened,” 1886). Tuppins was a popular mayor in Rendville and had been reelected for a second time. However he died in January of 1889 before he could complete the term (“Death of Dr. Tuppins,” 1889).

Tuppins left behind a number of letters to *The Cleveland Gazette* that encouraged literacy and promotion of African-Americans. On January 17, 1885, Tuppins penned a letter to the newspaper that expressed his anger that Jefferson Medical School in Philadelphia had rejected Rendville’s African-American postmaster, J. Villroy Simpson, as the school did not accept “colored students.” Tuppins enclosed the original letter and replied:

When the American Negro reads this letter let him ask himself is not THIS a blow to his ambition. Here is a man that stands high in the estimation of his community, an ex-postmaster, a gentleman and scholar, one who has held his office of trust faithfully, the PEER in the sight of God to Roberts Bartholow [Medical school administrator], denied admission to a house of training because he happens to be a member of a certain race of people. When shall we be redeemed and recognized as a people? Here we are; stolen by the thieves from our native country and for two hundred and forty years tilled their soil and made them

rich without compensation. Now feeling ourselves somebody, desiring to be a people capable of maintaining ourselves, desiring to cope with our fellow man and deprived from so doing by the accursed prejudice, placed lower in the scale of races than all nations... ("Jefferson Medical College," 1885).

Rendville's Interracial Union

Rendville offered opportunities for African-American entrepreneurship and community building, but life revolved around the economy of coal. As a single-resource industry town, everyone was affected during periods of strikes and depressions in the Hocking Valley. The labor union, first the Knights of Labor, and then the United Mine Workers of America, was an influential factor in race relations, labor opportunities, and politics. Richard Davis, the first African American elected to the national board of the UMWA, was a strong presence in Rendville and the union during those years. Although depressions and strikes occurred in the 1870s and 1880s, the decade from 1890 to 1900 was particularly tumultuous.

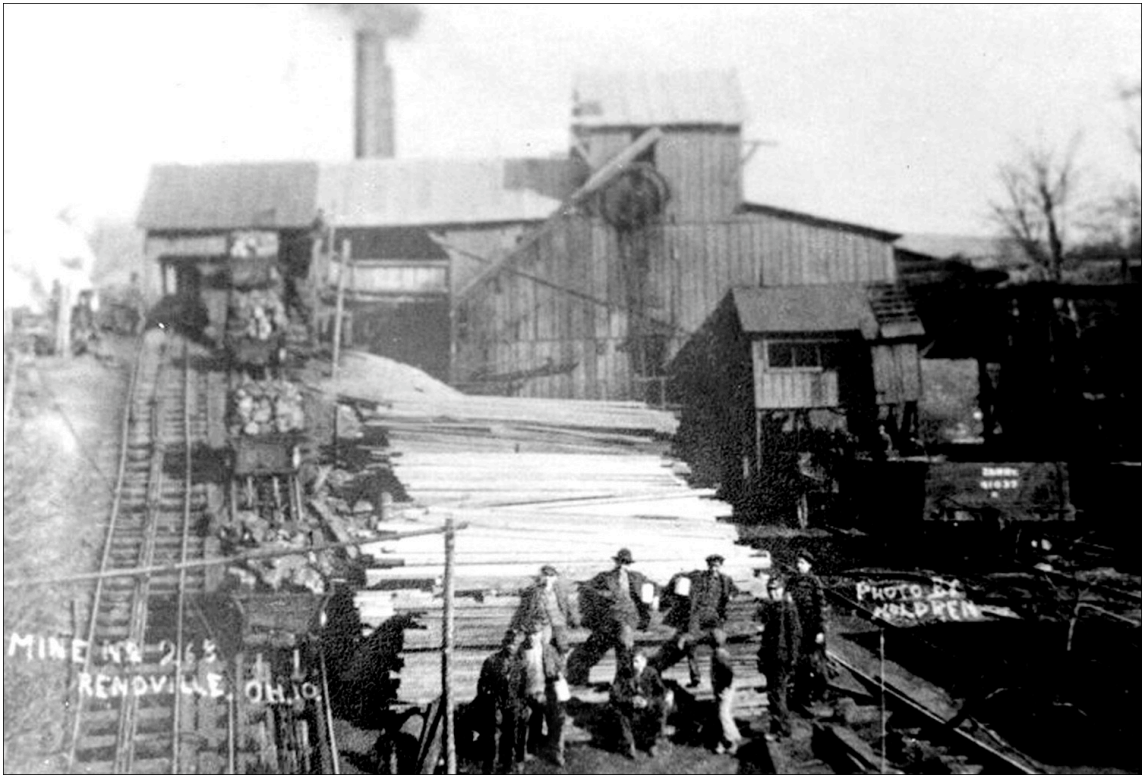


Figure 4.10. Mine 268 in Rendville, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Archive, 2011.

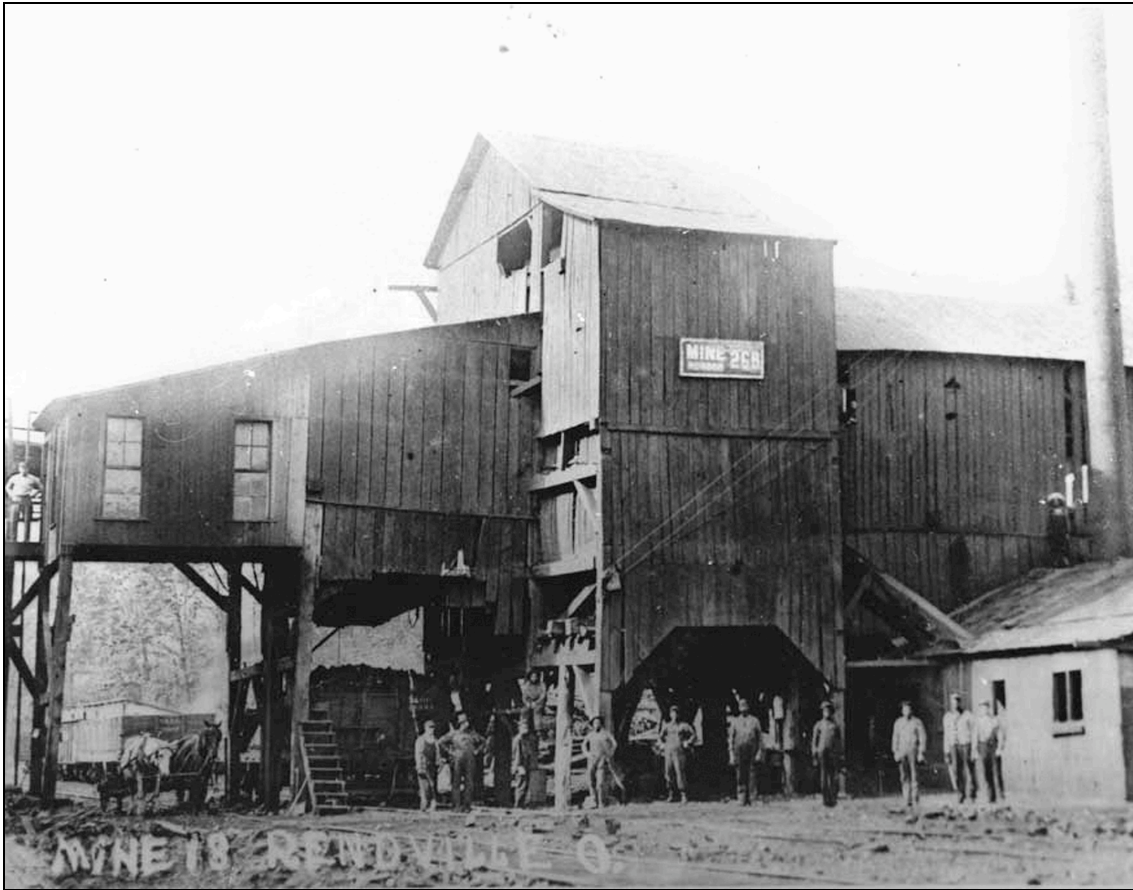


Figure 4.11. Mine 268 in Rendville, date unknown. Photograph courtesy of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Archive, 2011.

Labor unions followed the growth of the mining economy in the Hocking Valley. The National Miner's Association was established in the 1870s, followed by the state-wide Ohio Miners' Amalgamated Association in 1882, and the National Progressive Union of Miners & Mine Laborers in the mid-1880s (Tribe, 1986). The Knights of Labor had also organized several assemblies in the Hocking Valley by the early 1870s. Garlock (1982) noted the presence of 17 Knights of Labor Assemblies in Perry County, including four in Rendville. One of these assemblies, the Knights of Labor # 1935, was established

as an all-African American lodge in Rendville in 1882 (Nelson, 1996). Four years later, an interracial Knights of Labor Assembly, #8223, was formed in Rendville (Brier, 1980).

In 1890, District Assembly No. 135 of the Knights of Labor joined forces with the National Progressive Union of Miners & Mine Laborers, to form the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). Hocking Valley miners Chris Evans and John Lewis were instrumental in the leadership and formation of this new union, headquartered in New Straitsville (Trester, 1947).

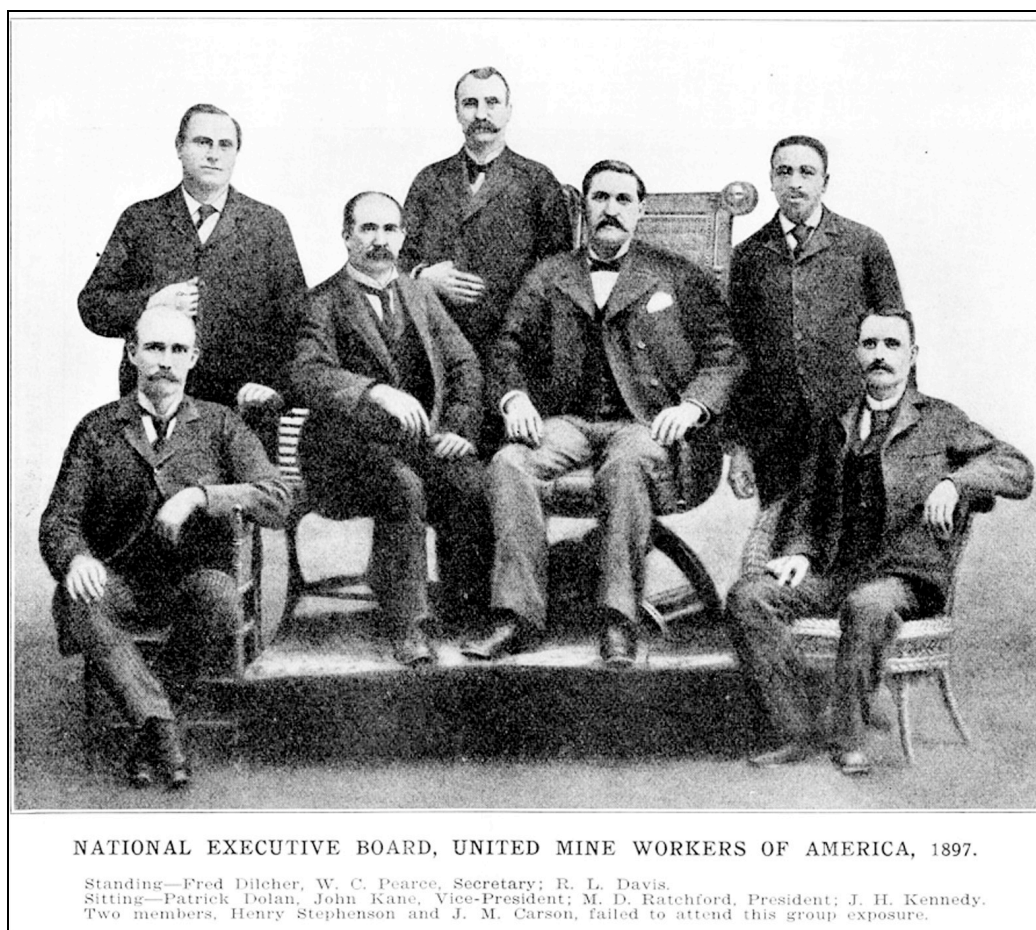


Figure 4.12. Richard L. Davis and the National Executive Board of the UMWA.

Photograph courtesy of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Archive.

Richard L. Davis

Biographical information on Richard Davis is sparse. Scholars have pieced together information on Davis from his prolific letters to the *United Mine Workers Journal* and the *New Labor Tribune*. Davis was born December 24, 1864, in Roanoke, Virginia. From the age of eight until seventeen, he worked in a tobacco factory in Roanoke. He then moved to the Kanawha and New River, West Virginia, region where he took employment as a coal miner and migrated to Rendville in 1882 (Gutman, 1977).

There is no evidence that Davis, unlike Isaiah Tuppins, Samuel Allen, and John L. Jones, was involved in fraternal orders or Rendville churches or community clubs. There are virtually no references in *The Cleveland Gazette* during the 1880s and 1890s in regards to Richard Davis. He was, however, a proponent of education and social elevation for African Americans. McCormick (1978) noted a letter Davis had written to the editor of *the United Mine Workers Journal* in December of 1894 in support of reading rooms. Davis solicited for coal miners to “get all the material we possibly can treating upon social and economic questions...then let us ...read and discuss such matters...to elevate us socially, politically and otherwise” (p. 124).

Davis was active in the Knights of Labor in Rendville before his involvement with the UMWA. The Knights of Labor had organized an African-American assembly in Rendville in 1882, the same year that Davis arrived. On November 13, 1886, *The Cleveland Gazette* published a resolution sent by Richard Davis to Terence Powderly, leader of the Knights of Labor. The resolution stated that “we of members of LA 1,935, K. of L. [African-American Assembly in Rendville] renew our obligations to the Order and pledge ourselves to do all in our power to swell the number in our ranks, and declare that we will never relinquish our work until the bulk of our brethren are brought within the folds of our noble Order” (“Knights of Labor in Rendville,” 1886).

In 1890, Davis attended the founding convention of the UMWA as a delegate and won election to the UMWA District 6 Executive Board. He won annual reelection to this position until 1895. In 1896, he was elected to the National Executive Board of the UMWA, the first African American man to achieve this position. He won reelection the following year as well. As a labor organizer, he traveled to coal camps in Pennsylvania,

Virginia, West Virginia and Alabama. This was a dangerous job as coal operators and white miners were suspicious not only of the union, but also of African Americans (Gutman, 1977).

Davis was both praised and denounced by African-American miners for his adamant stance on unity in the coalmines. He was vehemently opposed to African Americans who volunteered as strikebreakers. *The National Labor Tribune* published a letter from Davis on July 25, 1891, which lambasted African-American strikebreakers and inferred the practice only worsened race relations and helped no one but the coal operators. Davis said “the negro should know better than to run from place to place to break down wages, etc. He can plainly see that the money kings of this country are only using him as a tool to fill his [sic] own coffers with gold” (Brier, 1980, p. 427-428).

In July of 1892, white miners in Rendville refused to work for a recently hired African-American supervisor. When African-American miners threatened to separate and organize their own local assembly, William Rend stepped in and offered to change the status of Mine Number Three, back to an all-African-American mine. A number of African-American miners agreed to this arrangement. Davis, however, objected as he felt Rend was trying to divide the races and break the union. He later explained that he would not have opposed the mine reopening if the men had not been separated by race. In a letter to the *United Mine Workers Journal* on August 04, 1892, he wrote “I would not be so much against this thing if men were hired irrespective of color, but colored men to be hired exclusively and whites to be turned away I don’t like; and it is not right.” This stance led to a feeling among some African-American miners that Davis was a “traitor” to the race (Gutman, 1977, p. 136).

Davis's outspokenness was also detrimental to his relationship with coal operator William Rend. In 1895, Rend had Davis removed from his prominent position as checkweighman in Mine Number Three because Davis's views were not "in the interest of the men" (McCormick, 1978, p. 151). This effectively blacklisted Davis from work in the Hocking Valley. Three years later Davis despaired over his inability to work. In a letter to the *United Mine Workers Journal* on May 19, 1898, Davis noted "I have been threatened; I have been sandbagged; I have been stoned, and last of all, deprived of the right to earn a livelihood for myself and family" (Gutman, 1977, p. 127).

Tribe (1986) noted that at the time of Davis's death in 1900, he was working as constable of Rendville Precinct. He had also worked as a town marshal during the years he was blacklisted from mining. Davis was married at the time of his death and had two young daughters in Rendville (Nelson, 1996).

Demographically Unique

1880 and 1900: Population Profiles

In a study of 11 Hocking Valley coal towns, historian Ivan Tribe found the population in 1880 to be overwhelmingly white, at 98.1 %, with only 1.8 % African American. The Hocking Valley was also largely native born at 89 %, with only 21 % foreign born (Tribe, 1986). However, Rendville was distinctive as the majority (56 %) of its workforce in 1880 was foreign born. During that same year, the total population of Rendville's 349 residents was 100 % white (U.S. Census, 1880).

However, this data is misleading as the 1880 enumeration of Rendville was completed in the spring of 1880, just months before the migration of 125 African-American miners and their families from West Virginia. In a few short months Rendville's population became one-third African American, making it the only town with a sizable African-American population within the Hocking Valley.

Historical accounts point to a rapidly growing African-American population in the years 1880 to 1900. *The New Lexington Tribune* reported on January 05, 1882, that the population of Rendville was estimated to be 2,000 residents. The paper noted over 250 African-American miners in Rendville ("The Sunday Creek Valley," 1882). This was an estimation of working miners, however, and did not include family members. A few years later, the population may have been equally divided among whites and African Americans. J.L Jones in *The History of the Jones Family* noted that in 1884, "over one half of the people of this town were Negroes" (Jones, 2001, p. 29).

Outside of Rendville, the demographics of the towns of the Hocking Valley did not change dramatically from 1880 to 1900 as whites comprised 96.3 % of the population (Tribe, 1986). Rendville, however, had become a "judicious mixture" of one-third (38 %) African-American, one-third (36 %) native-born white, and almost one-third (26 %) foreign born (U.S. Census, 1900).

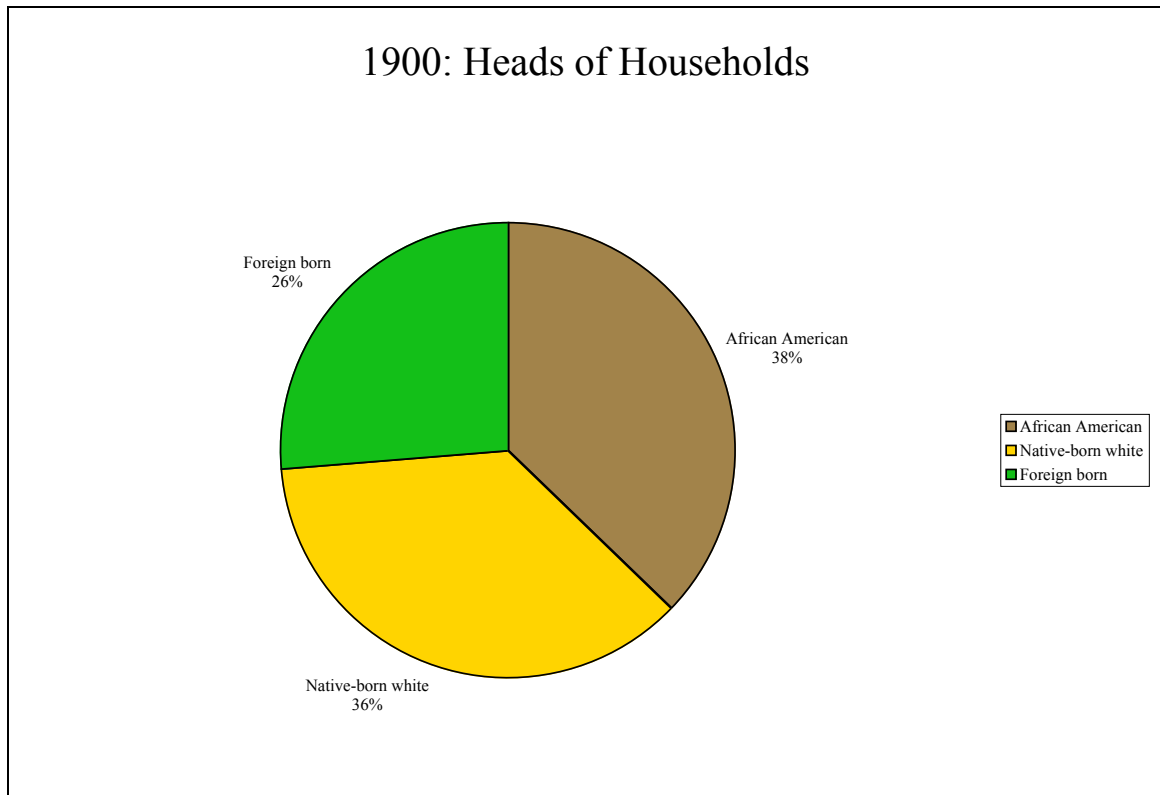


Figure Number 4.13. The population of Rendville in 1900 was comprised of a “judicious mixture” of almost equal parts of African American, native-born white, and foreign born.

Migration played an important factor in the African-American population of Rendville. In 1900, Ohio and Virginia figured prominently in the percentage of native-born heads of households. Over 40 % were born in Ohio, and over 20 % in Virginia. However, these numbers are misleading. When separated by race, whites comprised the majority of heads of households from Ohio. Of the Virginia-born heads of households, all except three were African American.

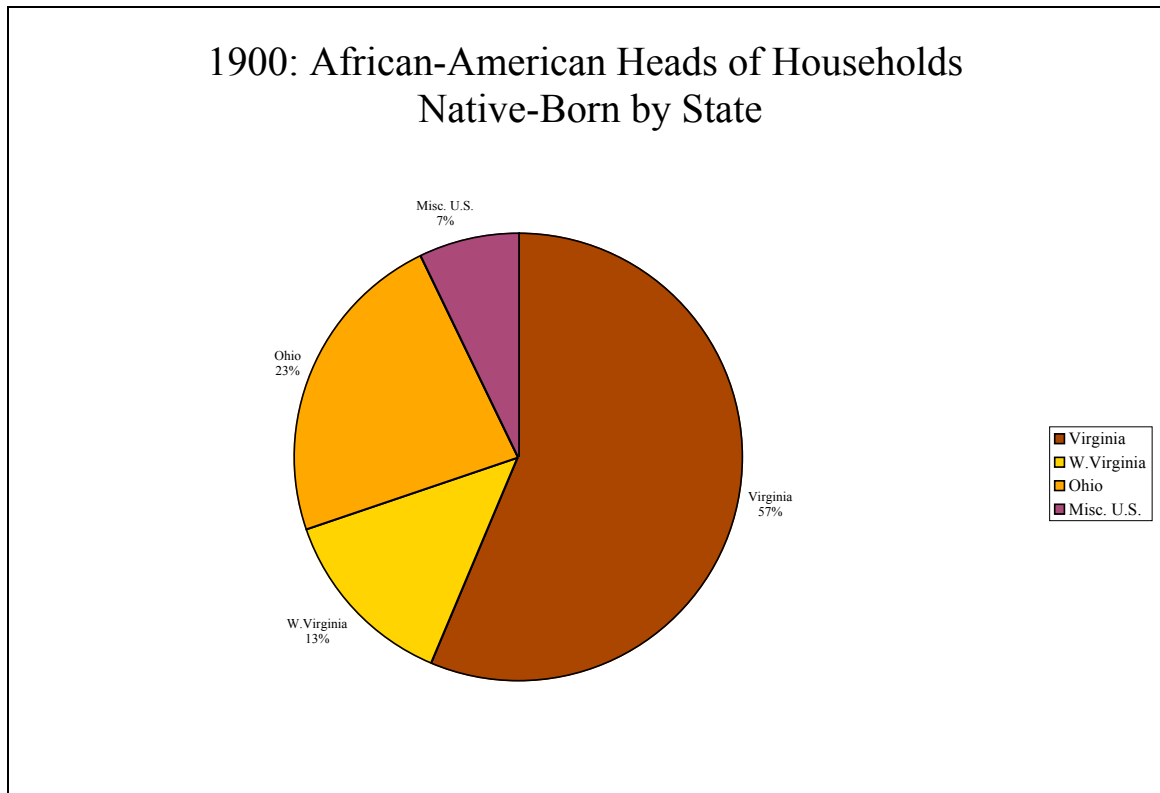


Figure 4.14. The majority of African-American heads of households were born in Virginia. Of the Virginia-born heads of households, all but three were African American.

In early 1880, no African Americans worked or resided in Rendville. Twenty years later, African Americans comprised almost 40 % of the workforce. The gradual pattern of increased African-American population would continue throughout the years. By 1920, the workforce of Rendville was 38 % white, 32 % African American, and 27 % Mulatto. By the 1970s, African Americans comprised the majority (99 %) of the population of Rendville (Joint Center for Political Studies, 1977). However, by the year 2000, the demographics had shifted again, and the population was 87 % white (<http://factfinder.census.gov>).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Rendville as an Anomaly in Time and Place

In this study I have argued that Rendville was an anomaly in time and place. The post-Reconstruction era was the lowest point in race relations between African Americans and whites. During this period, state governments enacted Jim Crow laws, which legally segregated every aspect of African-American's lives. Although a northern state, Ohio had "black laws" on the books for years restricting employment, militia duty, jury duty, public schools, and miscegenation. Many of these laws were not abolished until 1887. Middleton (2005) suggested that "Ohio whites wanted a right of existence and freedom for blacks but they didn't want integration" (p. 243).

Geographically, Rendville was located in southeastern Ohio, a region where racial views were closely aligned with those in the segregationist South. Coal mining jobs in the Hocking Valley were considered respectable positions and traditionally held by the white majority. When African Americans were recruited as strikebreakers in the Hocking Valley strike of 1874, white miners reacted with violence. Just a few years later, when African-American miners migrated from West Virginia to Rendville as replacement workers, they entered a region that held a deep-seated hatred toward African Americans. The structure of race relations in the Hocking Valley, as well as the northern coalfields, was directed by exclusion. Mining jobs were not available to African Americans outside of Rendville. Despite the limitations put upon them during this period and in this region, African Americans in Rendville were able to work and interact socially within the town.

William P. Rend, A Progressive Coal Operator

One reason that Rendville became an anomaly in time and place is the hiring practices and equal treatment of African Americans by William P. Rend. I have argued that Rend, founder of Rendville, was a progressive in the Gilded Age period. While operators in the Hocking Valley had used African-American strikebreakers as tools in which to subjugate white miners, Rend was empathetic to the plight of African Americans, and in turn, offered them jobs and equal pay during this time. Rend's hiring practices, as well as those of the Ohio Central Coal Company, were the reason for Rendville's distinct demographic profile. His persistence in keeping Rendville's mines open to African Americans encouraged them to stay.

The practice of welfare capitalism by the Ohio Central Coal Company helped to shape the physical and social framework of the African-American community. As construction costs of churches, schools, and recreational facilities were made available by the OCCC, African Americans used these resources to create a safe and successful African-American community.

Unique Demographics

Historical evidence has proven that Rendville was demographically unique in the Hocking Valley. In 1900, no other Hocking Valley towns had a significant African-American population. In fact, the African-American population in Rendville was most likely undercounted as accounts refer to a large population in the 1890s. While there were clusters of African Americans in Ohio cities, this was unusual in rural areas, especially in

mining towns, as the number of African-American miners in Ohio never reached more than 5 %.

From the beginning, Rendville stood apart from the other Hocking Valley coal towns as it had the highest number of foreign workers in the Hocking Valley in 1880. By the mid-1880s, the population was an almost equal combination of native whites, foreign born, and African Americans. In Rendville, this “judicious mixture” led to a population with no majority. African-American residents, educated and ambitious, took advantage of this opportunity to create leadership and business positions within the community.

The Role of African Americans In Shaping Their Own Future

Towns do not just happen. They are created and shaped by human agents. In the case of Rendville, I have argued that there were numerous contributors that helped to make Rendville distinctive. The Ohio Central Coal Company, coal operator William P. Rend, as well as native and foreign-born whites were agents in the formation of Rendville as a supportive and promising environment for African Americans. The Knights of Labor and the United Mine Workers of America were part of this process as they encouraged a work force, united by race and class. For African-American miners, this meant a voice in their economic and political future.

More importantly, however, was the role of African Americans in Rendville as agents of their own change. Nieves (2008) noted that past scholars in African-American studies focused on the roles of whites who shaped the landscape and have virtually ignored African Americans as “active agents of their own social change” (p. 4). Trotter

(1990) suggested that African Americans, while confined by white social conventions and barriers, shaped their own experience and created a new African-American middle class. These authors suggested that whites did not let African Americans succeed, rather African Americans created their own change.

In Rendville, this was also the case. John L. Jones, Isaiah Tuppins, and Samuel Allen were educated and professional men who intentionally migrated to Rendville. As successful African-American businessmen and leaders, they shaped how the community viewed and interacted with African Americans. They created a framework of fraternal, religious and political organizations, which instilled leadership values, self-respect, and middle-class morals. This strengthened and supported the entire African-American community.

Tyner (2006) noted that the post-Reconstruction era was a time of “recreating black spaces” (p. 45). African Americans in Rendville, miners and professionals, were able to create such a space where they could thrive economically, politically, and socially in an unlikely place and time.

Rendville Today

Rendville in 2011 is no more than a ghost town. There are a few scattered buildings on Main Street, including the town hall and the Baptist Church. The church was moved several times over the years and renovated in 2002 for use as an art center. The town hall was recently repainted and is used sporadically for special events and for town business. Most of the buildings however, are gone. Several fires at the turn of the century destroyed much of downtown. The state took a large part of South Main Street in the 1970s in order to widen Highway 13, the main highway running parallel to the town (Nelson, 1996).

Over the years, the population gradually declined and its composition shifted from a majority white to a majority African American. Heads of households in Rendville Village in 1910 were 51 % white, 45 % African American, and 4 % Mulatto (U.S. Census, 1910) By 1920, those demographics had shifted to 38 % white, 32 % African American and 27 % Mulatto (U.S. Census, 1920). Fifty years later, in 1970, Rendville was 99 % African American (Joint Center for Political Studies, 1977). Today, in 2011, Rendville has 30 residents and its demographic structure is 80.6 % white, 8.3 % African American, and 11.1 % Multi-race (U.S. Census, 2010).

For over 30 years, a Rendville Club was held in Columbus. Past residents of the town would get together and socialize once a month. But as people got older, the meetings stopped and then ended altogether (Nelson, 1986). Today, however, social media is playing a part in renewed interest in Rendville. A facebook page, dedicated to Rendville, has over 50 followers. On the site, many of the former residents post historical photographs and memories of growing up in the town (www.facebook.com, 2010).

There is also an ongoing effort by the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Council, a nonprofit whose aim is to promote the historical towns in the Hocking Valley coal mining district. Through education and heritage tourism, they hope to regenerate interest and investment in communities like Rendville, Corning, and Shawnee.

On October 21, 2010, an Ohio Historic Marker was placed next to the steps of the Rendville Town Hall. It commemorated “the breaking of the color barrier by African American Citizens” of Rendville. The marker honored Adam Clayton Powell, Sr., Dr. Isaiah Tuppins, Richard L. Davis, Sophia Mitchell, and Roberta Preston. Mitchell was elected as the first African-American woman mayor in Ohio in 1970. Preston was the first African-American woman postmaster elected in Ohio in 1963.

Alderman and Dwyer (2009) noted that monuments, such as historical markers, symbolize “certain versions of history by casting legitimacy upon them.” These monuments are important as they “influence how people remember and value the past” (p. 51). The placement of the historical marker honors and memorializes the African-American leaders of Rendville. But more importantly, it gives credence to Rendville as a community where white, foreign-born, and African-American residents worked together to create a place in which residents of all races could succeed.



Figure 5.1. Rendville mayor Bryan Bailey, left, Dr. Ronald Stephens, center, Chair of African-American Studies at Ohio University, and John Winnenberg of the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Council participate in the historical marker dedication and celebration (Photograph by the author).



Figure 5.2. Mayor Bryan Bailey, left, and Dr. Frans Doppen of Ohio University, unveil the historical marker on Main Street in Rendville (Photograph by the author).



Figure 5.3. The Rendville Town Hall, rarely used, was opened to the public during the historical marker dedication. The marker is located directly to the right of the building (Photograph by the author).

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APPENDIX

Demographic Profile of Rendville's Workforce: 1880 and 1900

The methodology in defining this population profile entailed examination of handwritten manuscript census schedules. This method has some limitations as handwriting can be illegible and questions were often left unanswered. Limitations were also inherent in the enumerator's questions. In 1880, for example, only one answer was allowed for occupation, which meant that some titles such as engineer or blacksmith were not connected to a specific industry. However, as Rendville was created as a coal-mining town, it is safe to assume that most occupations were either coal or railroad related.

Despite the limitations, census data provides a valuable profile of the people who lived in this early-stage coal town. The information provides historical knowledge about the occupations, family structure, nativity and ethnicity of those who migrated to Rendville. This study focuses mainly on the structure of the adult work force. A total of 50 heads of households were counted, along with 125 boarders. The total population count was 349. As Rendville was a coal-mining town, this study separates heads of households from boarders as they represented an important part of an early-stage coal town.

1880: Boarders

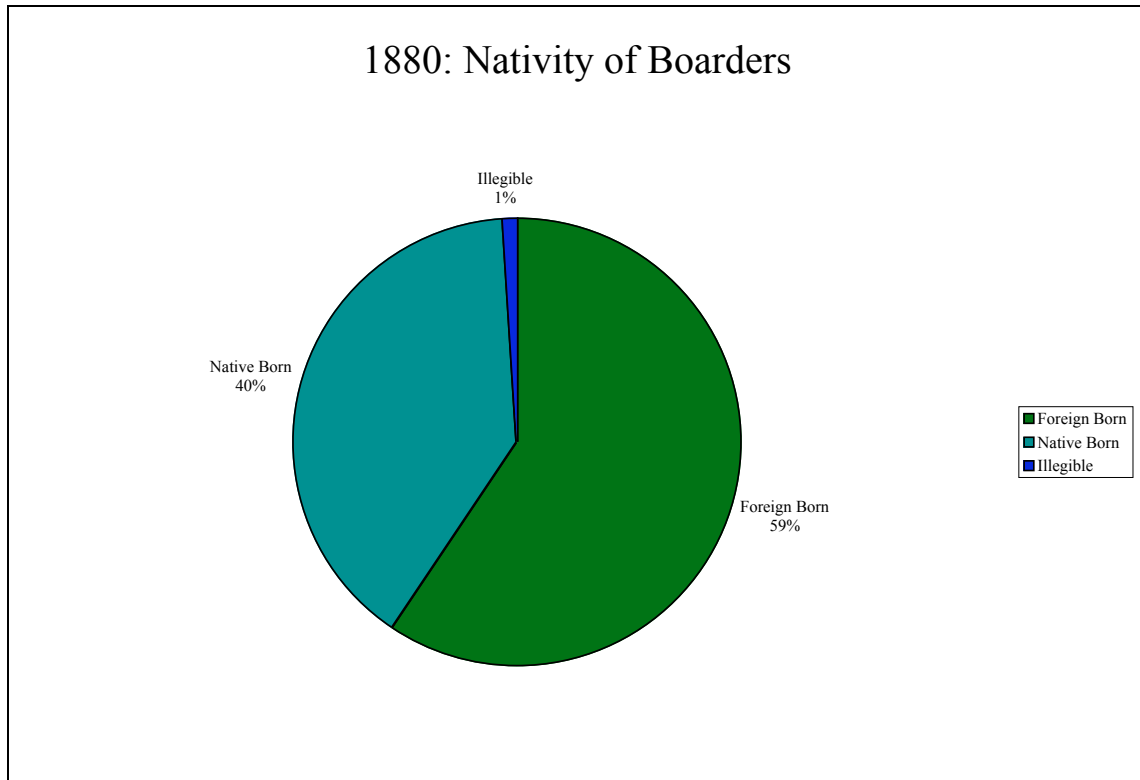
The 1880 census of Rendville shows a typical pattern for early stage coal-mining towns during the late nineteenth century, as the majority of these towns were composed of unmarried men who worked in the coal industry (Shifflett, 1991). Of the 122 boarders in Rendville, there were 116 unmarried males, one married male and 5 females with a total average age of 29.8. Boarders in Rendville constituted about one third (35 %) of the town's population. Many of the boarders lived in the same household. An example is shown in the household of Michael Kinney, who housed 30 boarders, almost exclusively native Ohioans and Irish-born. This house was more than likely a boardinghouse. On April 15, 1880, *The New Lexington Tribune* reported that Michael Kinney of Moxahala had erected a boardinghouse in Rendville ("Business is Lively," 1880). The household of Charles Tolcott included 17 boarders, both native and foreign born, while William Irwin housed 16 boarders, all native Swedes. The 1880 census questions did not distinguish between types of household structures so it is difficult to determine if these households were boarding houses.

1880: Nativity of Boarders

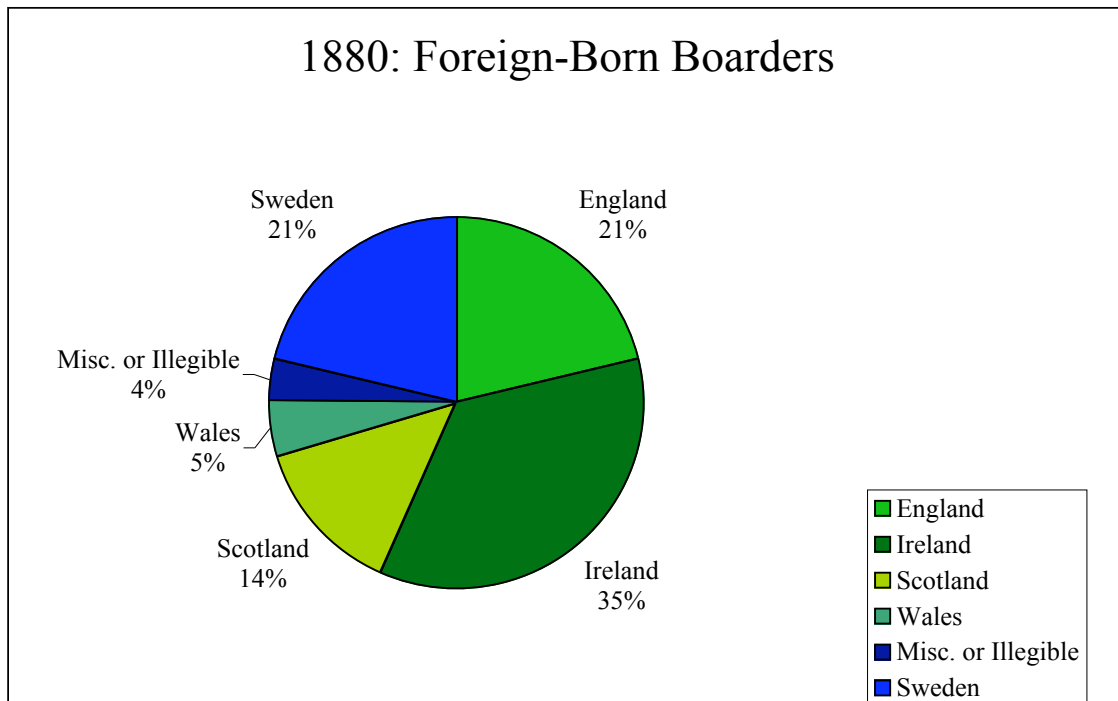
A majority of the boarders, 59 %, were foreign born. Over three fourths of the foreign born were from the British Isles representing Ireland, England, Scotland, and Wales. Of the American born boarders, over half were native Ohioans, at 54%, followed by those born in Pennsylvania at 29 %.

On parental nativity, similar patterns were found showing a majority of the parents were natives of Ireland at 40 %, while 15 % were English born. Swedish-born

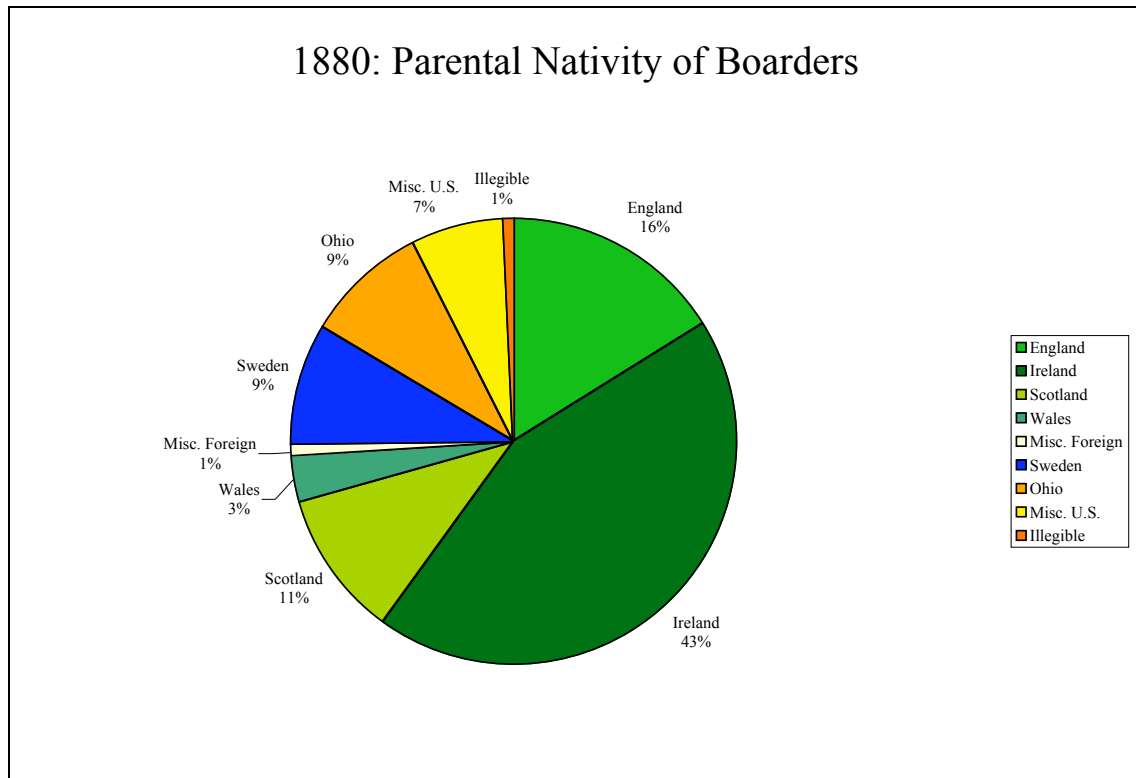
parents comprised 14 % of parental ancestry and parents born in Ohio amounted to only 9 %. Other regions were represented at a minority.



Over half (59 %) of the boarders in Rendville in 1880 were born outside of the United States. Rendville had the highest population of foreign born in the Hocking Valley.



The majority of boarders in Rendville were born in the British Isles, representing England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. In 1880, Sweden represented 21 % of the boarding population. However, in 1900, no Swedes were listed in the Rendville census.

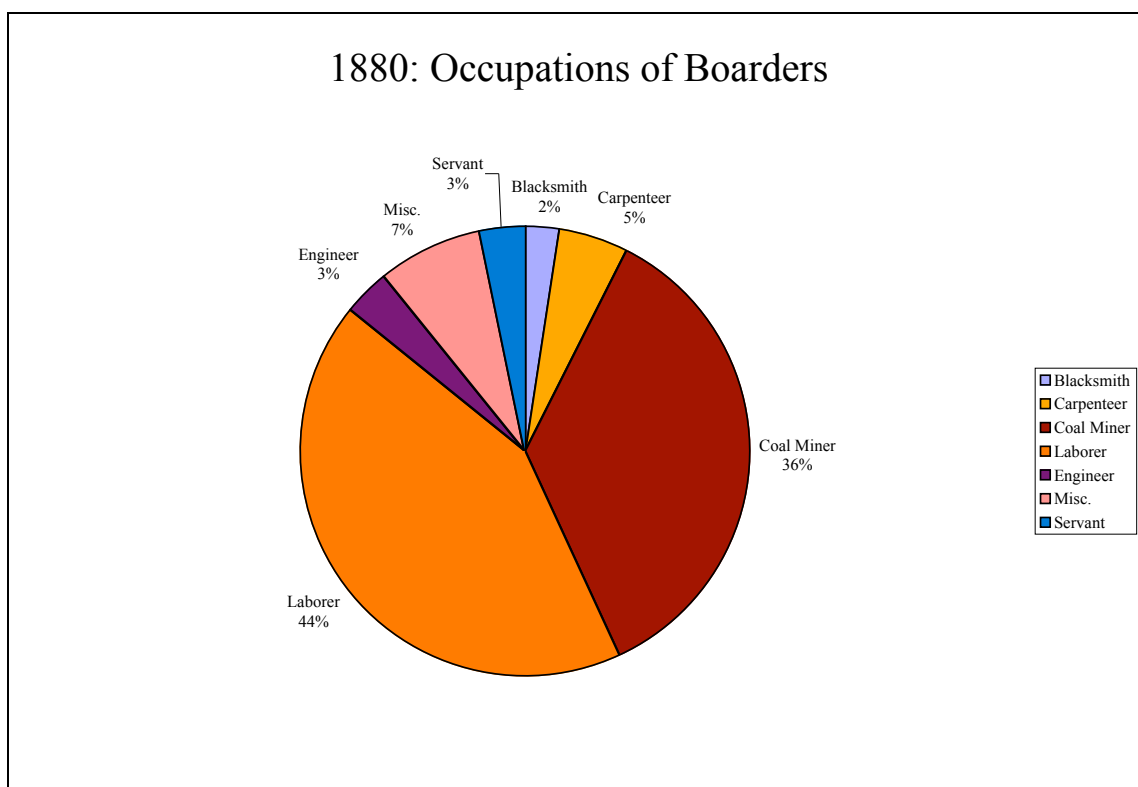


The British Isles was the most represented region for parents of boarders in Rendville, with 43 % born in Ireland.

1880: Occupations of Boarders

Occupational structure showed that 34 % of the boarders were coal miners, while 44 % were listed as laborers. It is assumed that because Rendville was recently created as a coal town, these labor positions were related to the coal or railroad industry. An example of this can be seen in Rendville's Swedish population. A New Lexington Tribune article in 1880 noted that William Rend had recently hired 35 Swedes from Chicago to work in his Rendville mines. Although only 17 were enumerated, they were all listed as laborers (Tribe, 1986). Other occupations for boarders included barber,

blacksmith, bricklayer, carpenter, grocer and postmaster. Four of the female boarders were listed as servants and one as a housekeeper.



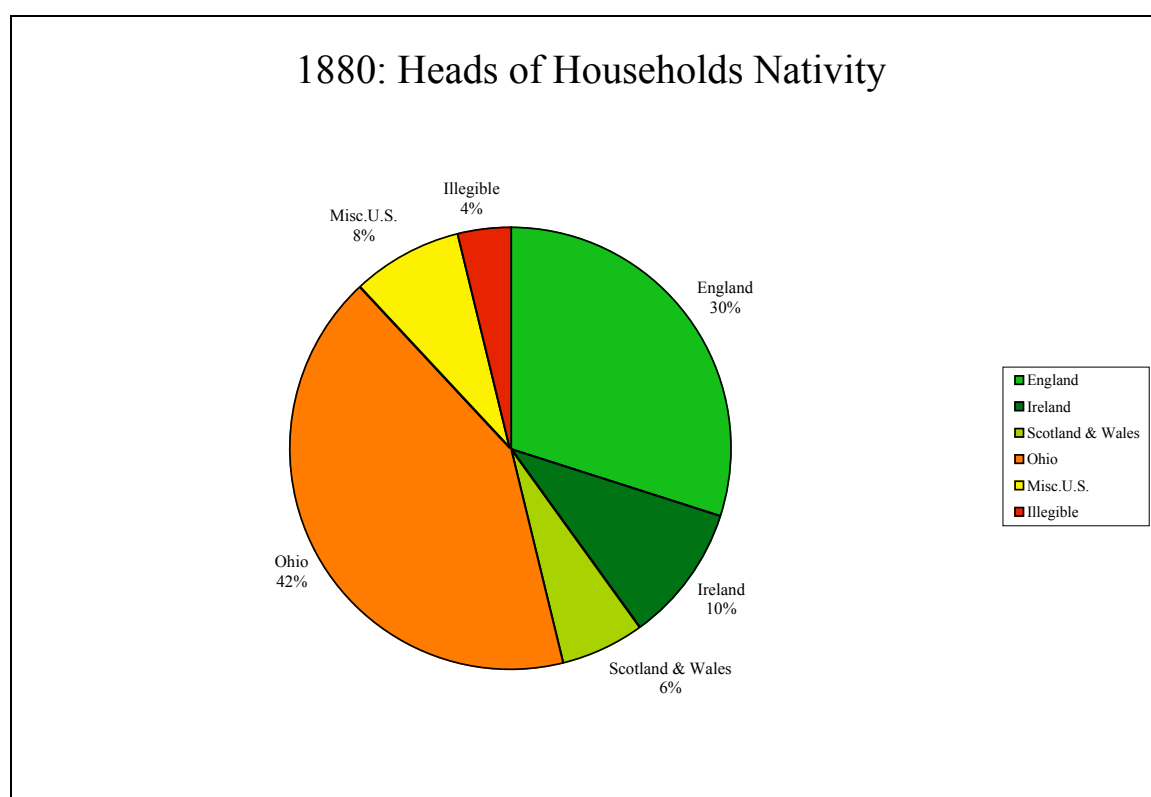
Boarders were primarily coal miners and laborers in Rendville. There were a few other miscellaneous occupations. Women held all the servant positions listed in the census.

1880: Heads of Households

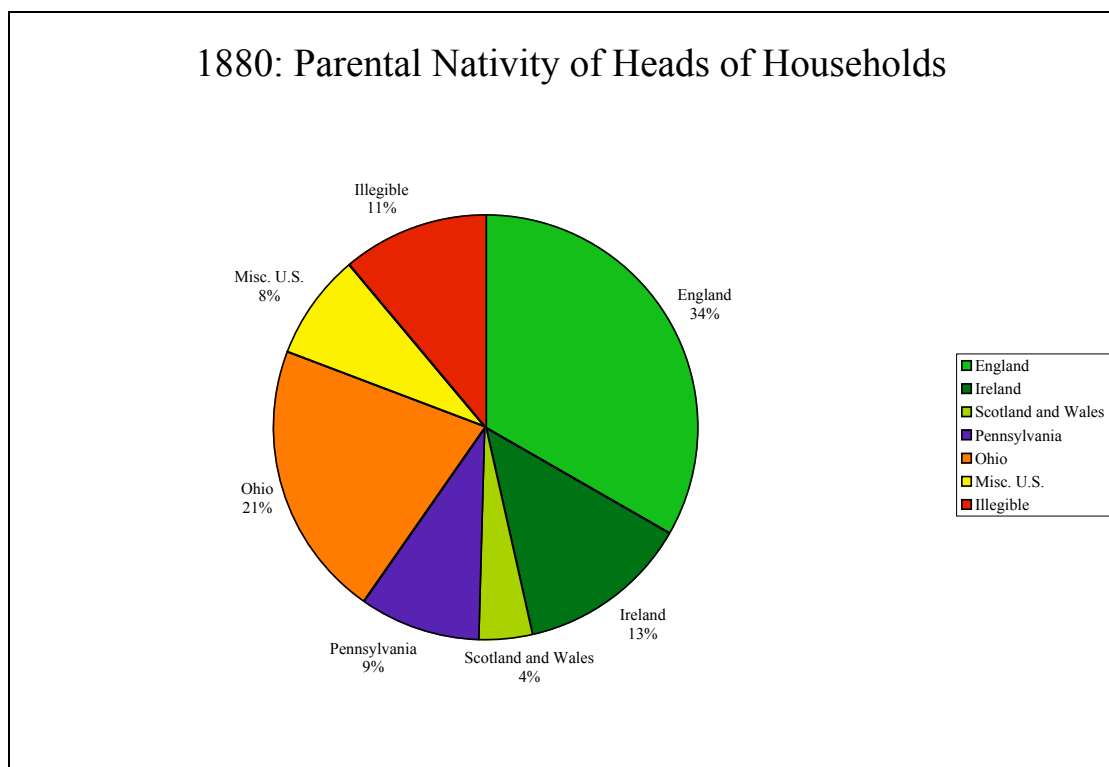
Of the 50 heads of households enumerated, 49 were white males and one was a white female. The average age of heads of household was 49 and all but two were married. Rendville had a large number of medium sized families with over 60 % having at least two children. Only three households included extended family members.

1880: Nativity of Heads of Households

Nativity of heads of households among native born and foreign born was nearly equal. Of the heads of households, 25 residents were native born and 23 foreign born, with two illegible. Of the American born heads of households, 42 % were native Ohioans and of the foreign born, 46 % were from the British Isles.



Around half of the heads of households in Rendville were foreign born. The majority of the native born were from Ohio.



Parental nativity was similar as 46 % of the parents were born in the British Isles. Of the native born, only 22 % were from Ohio and 9 % were born in Pennsylvania.

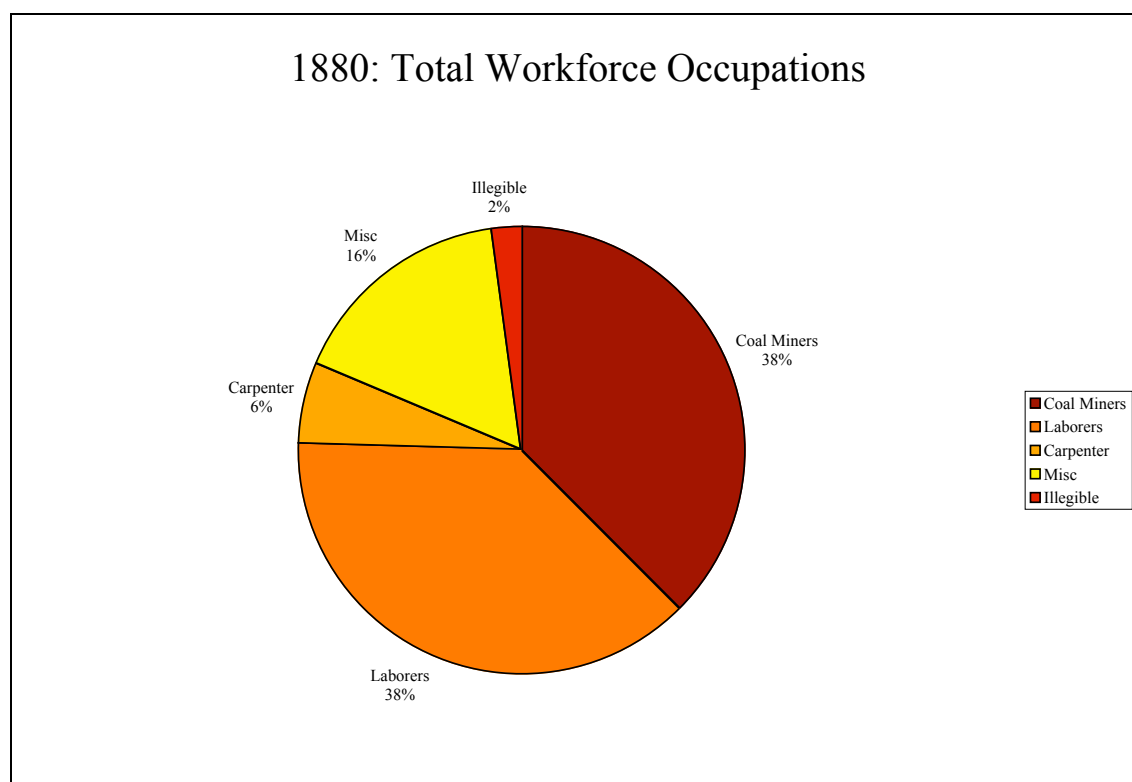
Coal mining represented the majority of heads of household's occupations while laborers only represented 20 % of the occupation. The percentage of boarders who listed their occupation as laborer, however, was much higher at 44 %.

1880: Occupations of Heads of Households, Including Adult Sons

Occupations of heads of households, like the boarders, were predominantly within the coal mining industry at 40 %, followed by laborer at 20 %, carpenter at 8 %, and farmer at 6 %. Professions outside those categories included barber, blacksmith, farmer, grocer, miller, stonemason and storekeeper. These accounted for about 22 % of the

occupational titles. Five adult sons were also counted as coal miners in Rendville.

Their birthplaces were from Scotland, Ireland, Ohio and England. An additional four adult working sons were listed as laborers, three of whom were Ohio born and one was from Scotland.



Of the total workforce in Rendville, coal mining was the most represented occupation, followed by laborer.

1880: Total Workforce

Of the total working adult population, including boarders, heads of households, and adult children, over half were foreign born. The majority of Rendville's foreign-born

workers hailed from Britain, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The workforce was also single- industry-based as over 76 % gave their occupations as coal miners or laborers.

Conclusion: 1800 Population Profile

Rendville in 1880 was similar to other single industry towns in that its population contained a large number of single, male coal miners. The population's nativity was also similar to other coal towns in the Hocking Valley with a mix of foreign born and native born, specifically Ohio born. The British Isles represented the majority of foreign born as was the case in many of the Ohio coal and industry towns. The early industrialization of England and Wales produced a large number of experienced miners who were eager to move to America for more favorable conditions (Van Vugt, 2006).

1900 Population profile

For the decade of the 1880s and 1890s, historical records suggested that Rendville hit its population peak in the mid 1880s and then began a slow decline in the 1890s. In 1921, a fire at the United States Department of the Interior destroyed most of the 1890 census including Perry County, Ohio (Blake, 1996). However, aggregated data reported 859 residents in Rendville in 1890 (Gilkey, 1901).

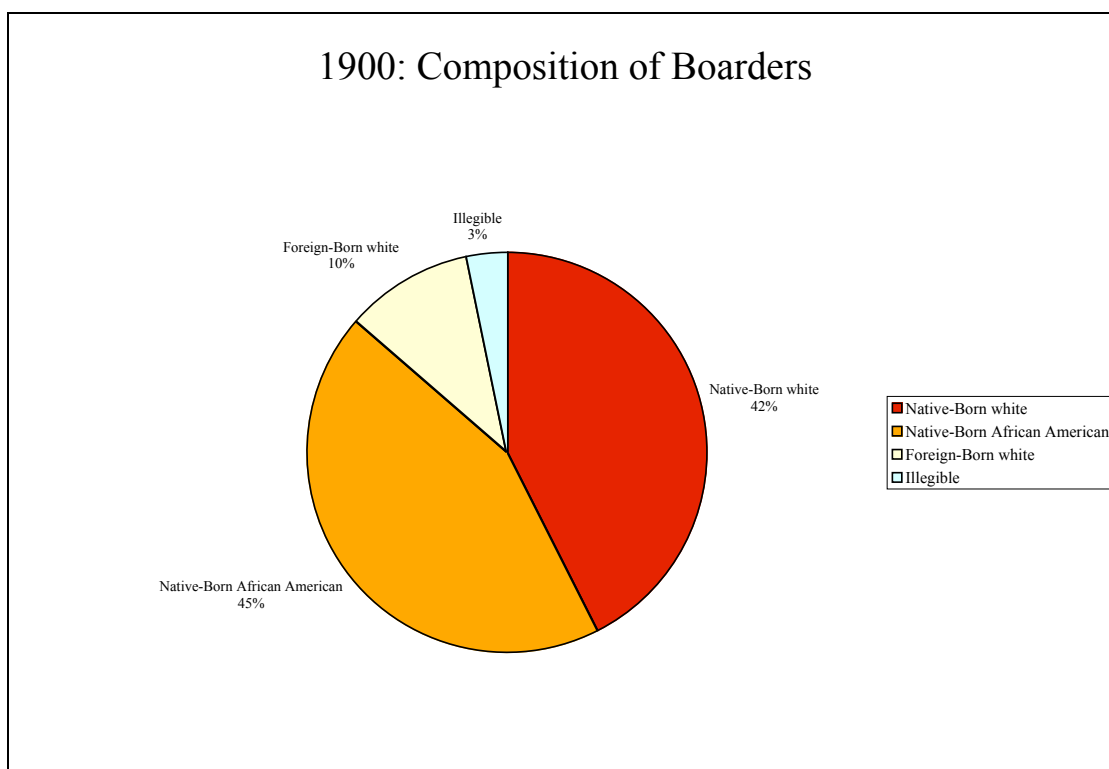
The 1900 Census

The 1900 census noted that 1,304 men, women, and children resided in Rendville Village and Rendville Voting Precinct. The population of the village was 790 and the voting precinct was 514. A total of 298 heads of households were counted along with 59

boarders. The voting precinct was determined by residents who voted in both village of Rendville, and in Monroe Township (Barrows, 1976).

1900: Boarders

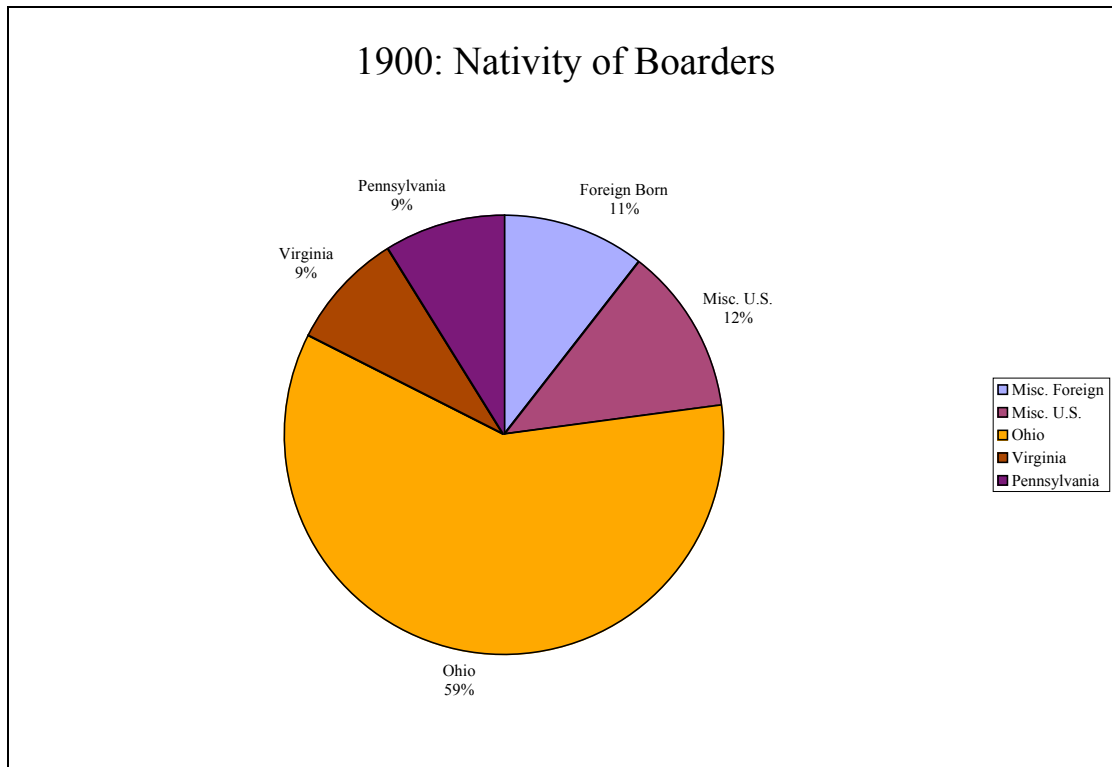
One dramatic change in Rendville between 1880 and 1900 was the number of boarders. In 1880, boarders comprised over one third of the entire population of Rendville. By 1900, the percentage of boarders was less than five percent. The majority of boarders (60 %) in 1880 were foreign born, while boarders in 1900 were primarily (87 %) native born. In 1880, there were no African Americans and only four percent were women. In 1900, almost one half (44 %) of the boarders were African-American and 27 % were women. Although none of the boarders were married in 1900, five had households with children.



The overall composition of boarders in 1900 showed almost equal percentages of native-born African Americans and whites. A small percentage (10 %) was foreign born, compared to the high percentage (60 %) of foreign born in 1880.

1900: Nativity of Boarders

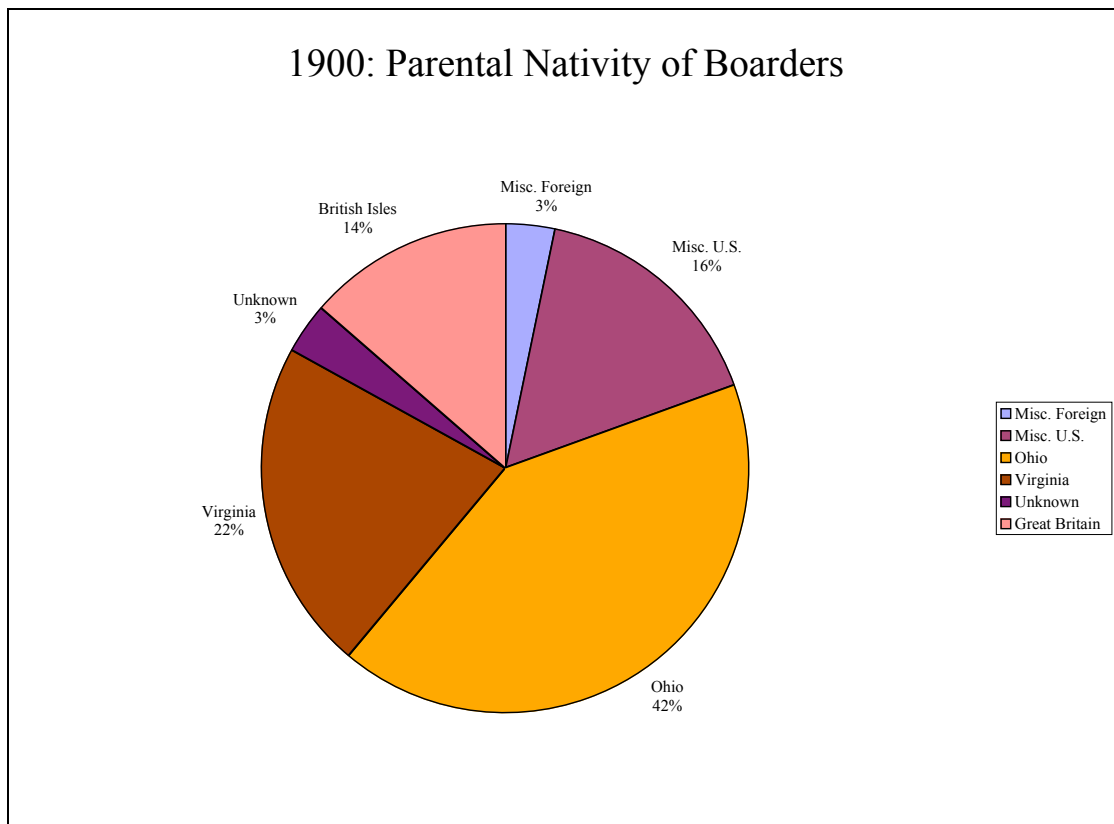
The majority (59 %) of boarders in Rendville were Ohio natives. Whites and African Americans were equally dispersed in regard to states. Additional states represented included West Virginia, Illinois, North Carolina and New York. Austria and Germany represented individual foreign-born boarders, the remaining four were from England.



The majority (59 %) of boarders were Ohio born, while Virginia and Pennsylvania figured prominently as well.

1900: Parental Nativity of Boarders

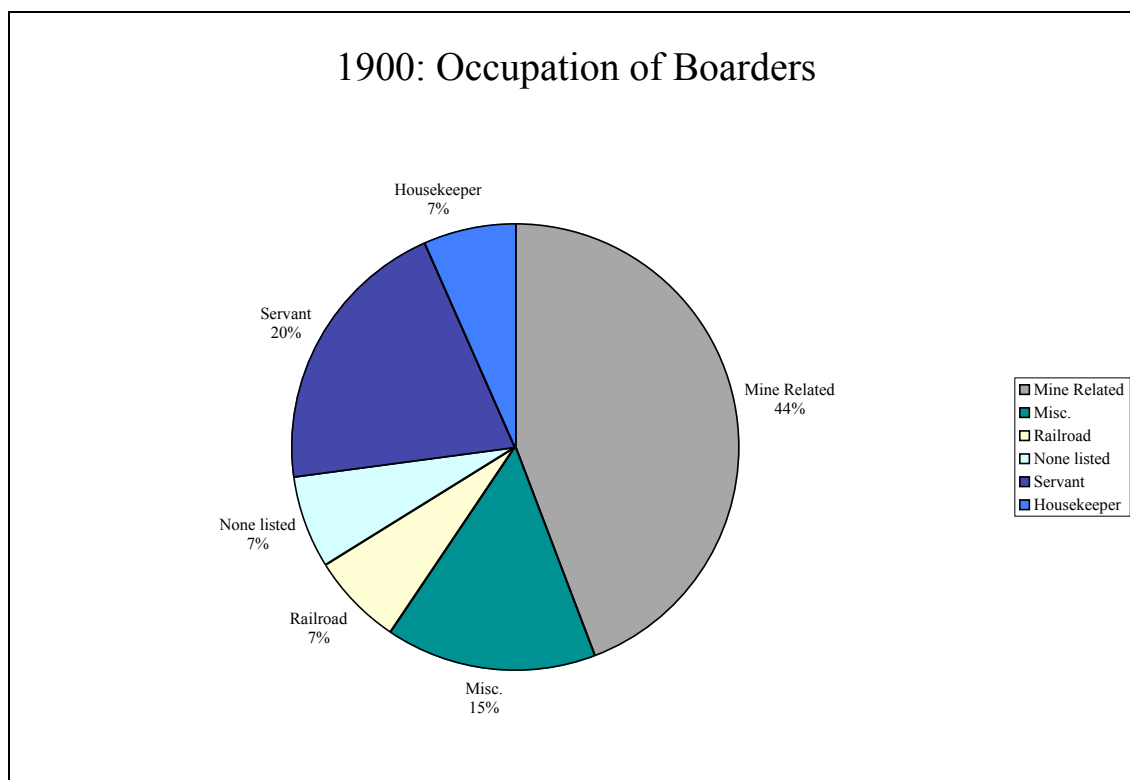
Parental nativity of boarders was over 80 % foreign born in 1880. By 1900, only 17 % of parents were foreign born. Of the foreign born, the majority were from the British Isles. The majority (61 %) of boarder's parents were from Ohio, followed by Virginia at 22 %.



The majority of boarder's parents were native born primarily representing the states of Ohio and Virginia.

1900: Occupations of Boarders

The percentage of boarders who worked as mine laborers in 1880 was 34 %. Day laborers represented 44 % of the occupations. By 1900, 44 % of boarders enumerated listed their occupations as mine related and only 2 % as day laborers. The number of housekeeping and servant positions, all held by women, had increased from 4 % in 1880 to 27 % in 1900. Additional occupations in 1900 included physician, saloonkeeper, barber, schoolteacher and dry goods sales.



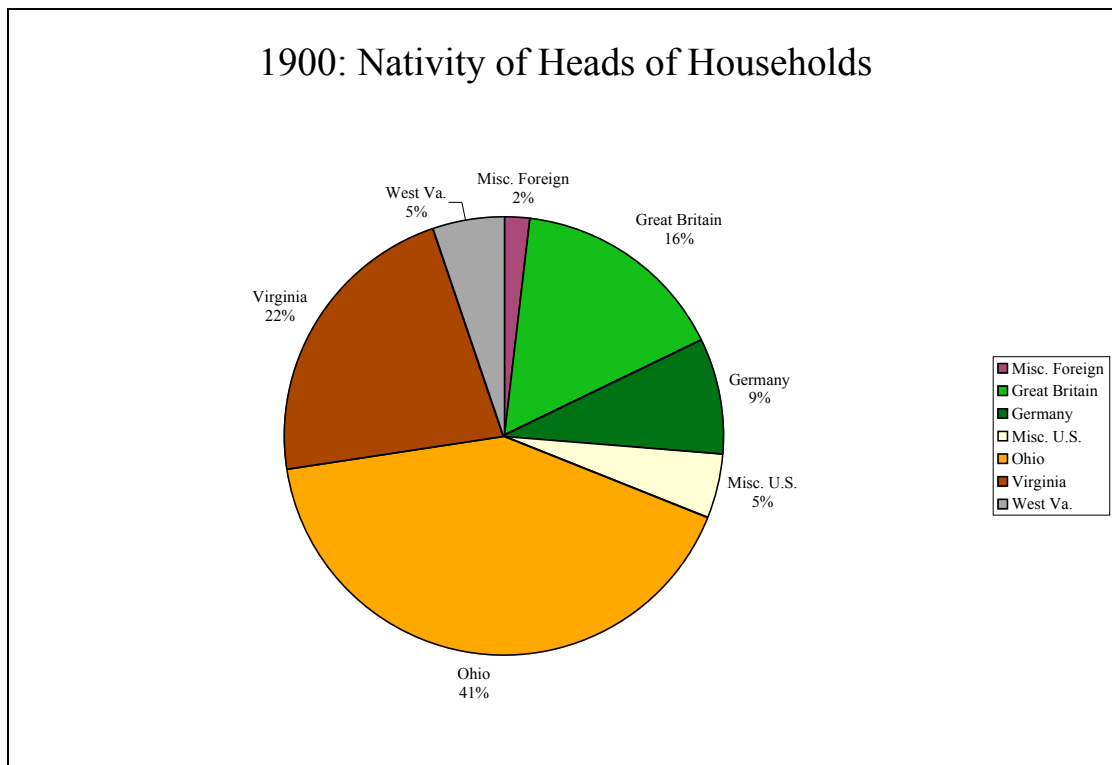
In 1900, servant and housekeeper positions had increased while the number of day labor positions decreased. Mining continued to play a large role in boarder's occupations in Rendville.

1900: Heads of Households

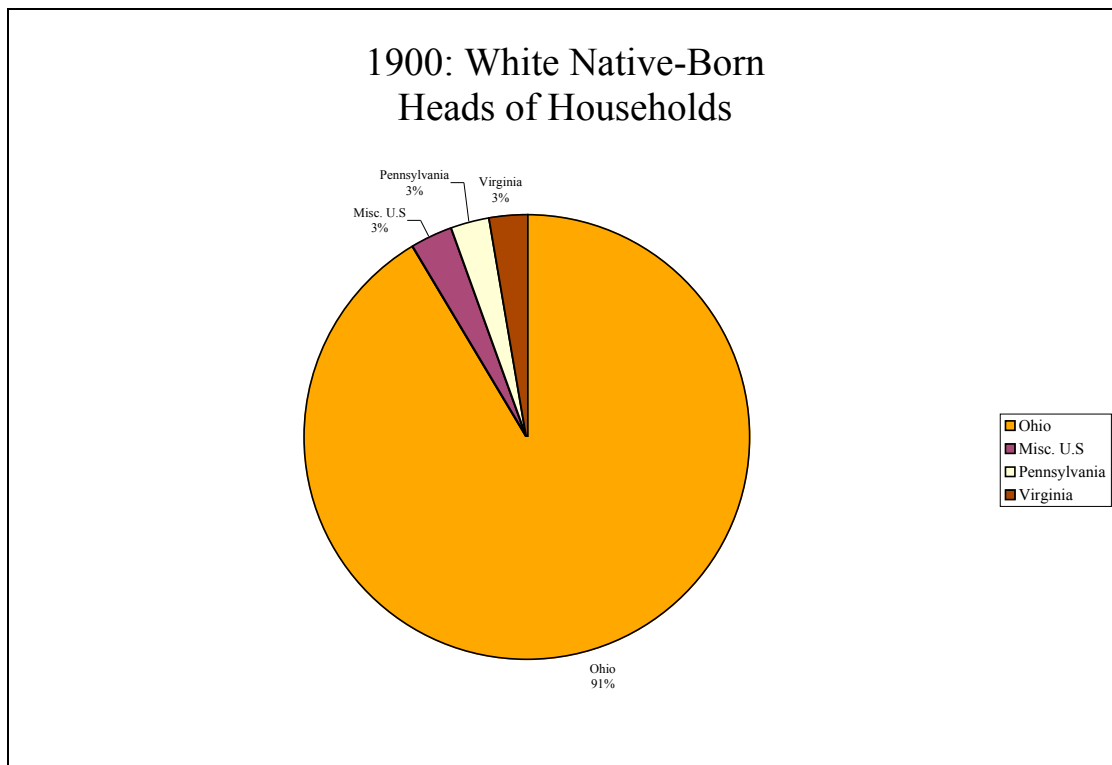
There were 298 heads of households listed in the 1900 census. Of these, 186 were white and 112 were African American. Included in heads of households were 271 males and 27 females. Nativity of heads of households showed that the majority (73 %) was native born, and only 27 % were foreign born. This is in contrast to the census of 1880, which noted almost equal amounts of native and foreign-born heads of households. Family composition in 1900 showed that 78 % were married and at least 70 % of the households had at least one child and as many as nine children.

1900: Nativity of Heads of Households

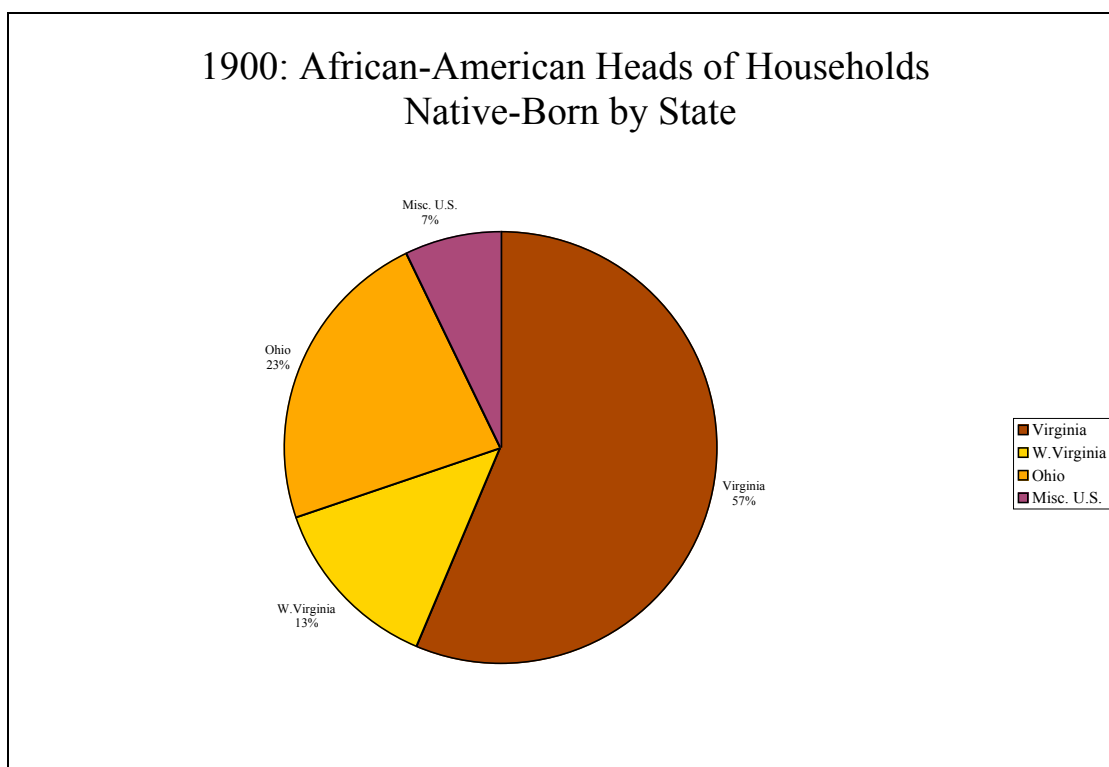
In 1880 and 1900, the majority of foreign-born heads of households were born in the British Isles. In 1900, a new addition was that of German-born heads of households, which comprised almost 9 % of the foreign-born population. Many of the German families, such as the Winnenbergs, owned businesses in town and were an integral part of the community. Another German head of household in 1900, Henry Steffen, a saloonkeeper, was elected mayor in 1908.



In 1900, the nativity of heads of households was primarily (73 %) native born. The British Isles represented the majority of foreign born at 16 %.



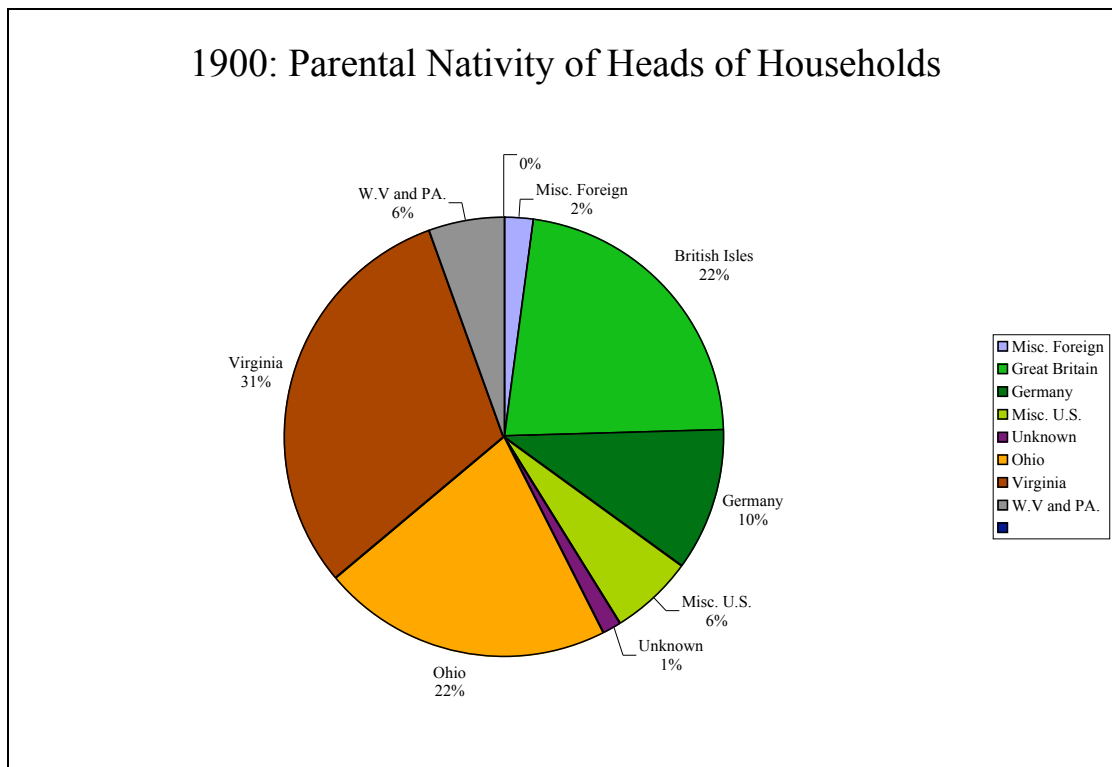
When separated by race, census results show that the majority of native-born white heads of households were born in Ohio. Only three percent of white heads of households were born in Virginia.



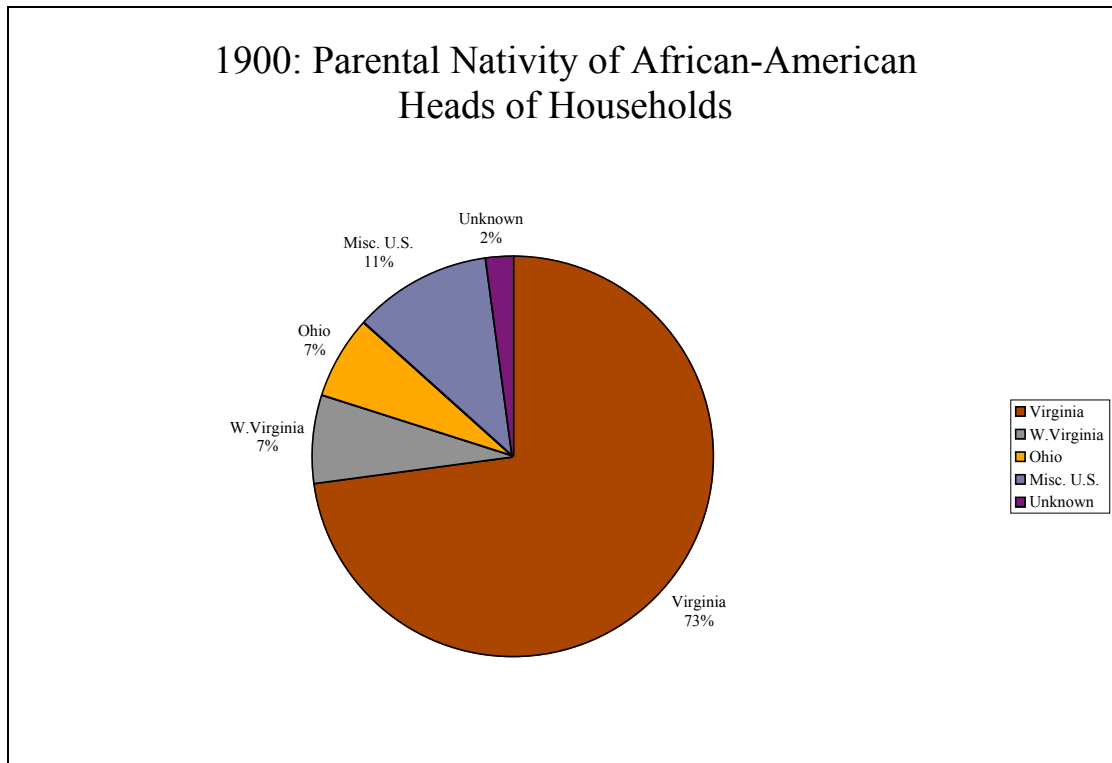
The majority of African-American heads of households were born in Virginia. Of the Virginia-born heads of households, all but three were African American.

1900: Parental Nativity of Heads of Households

In 1880, the majority (46 %) of foreign-born parents of heads of households were born in the British Isles and the majority of native-born parents (22 %) were born in Ohio. In 1900, the British Isles represented the majority (22 %) of foreign-born parents. An additional 10 % of parents were German born. As with the heads of households, two states, Ohio and Virginia, represented the highest percentages at 22 % and 31 % respectively. When separated by race, 73 % of the African-Americans parents were born in Virginia.



The majority of parental nativity of heads of households was divided between foreign born, and native born. Of the native born, the majority were from the states of Ohio and Virginia.

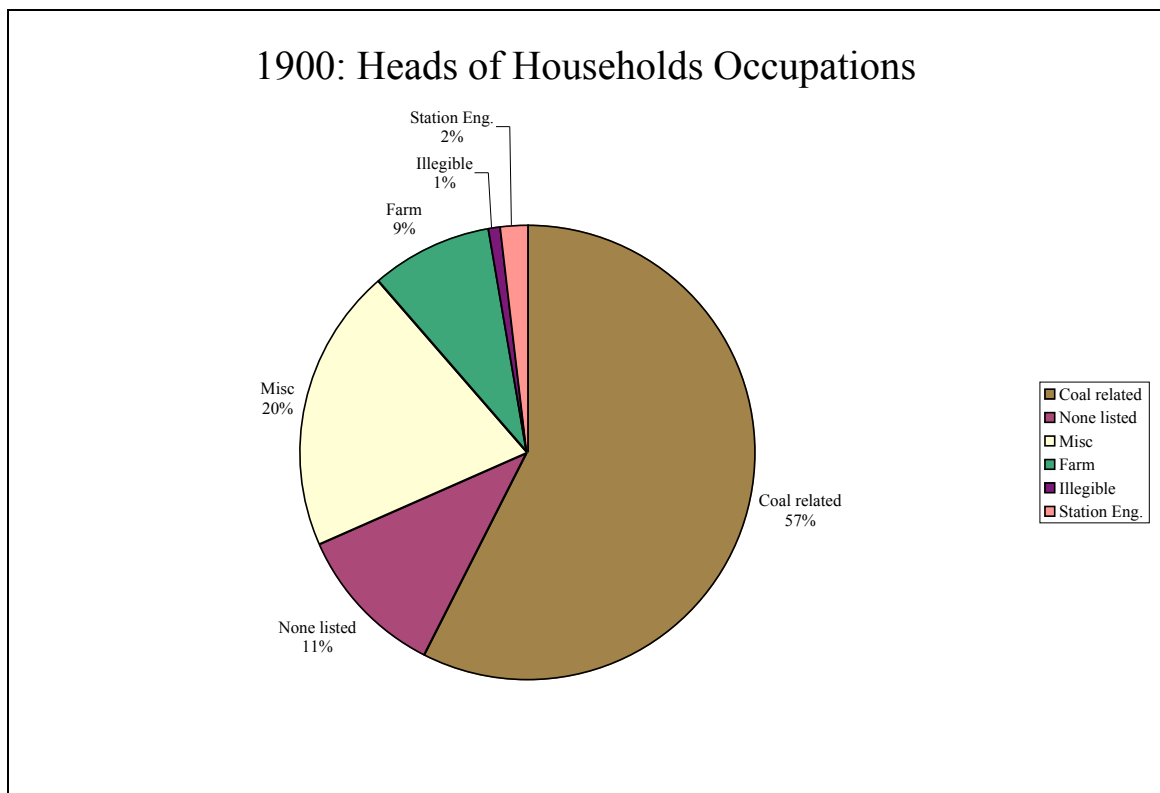


The state of Virginia represented the majority (73 %) of African-American parental nativity.

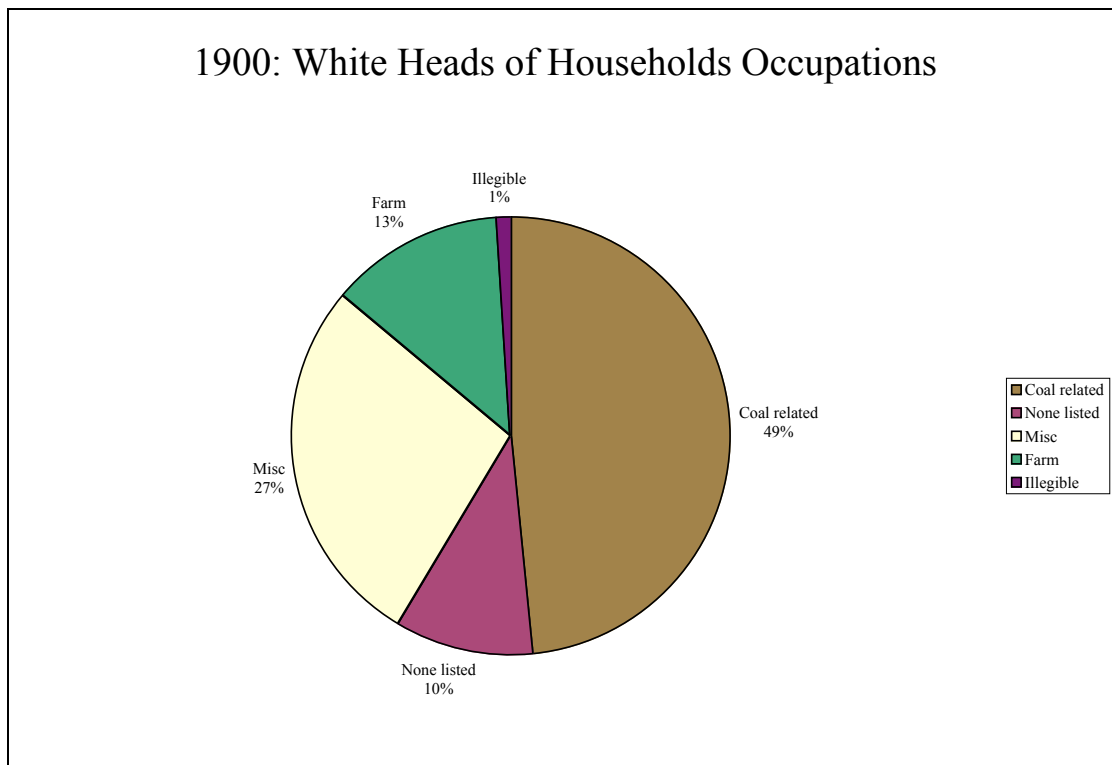
1900: Heads of Household's Occupation

The 1900 census showed a decrease in the number of construction-related positions. In 1880, day laborers represented 20 % of heads of household's occupation. In 1900, only 2 % listed their occupation as day laborer. Carpenters comprised 8 % of the occupations in 1880 but this number had dropped to 2 % by 1900. Coal mining and mining-related positions had increased slightly and represented 57 % of the occupational titles, compared to 40 % in 1880. Farm and farm-labor occupations increased from 6 % in 1880 to 9 % in 1900. There were also a significant number of residents who listed "none" as their occupation in 1900. This category was absent in the 1880 census of Rendville.

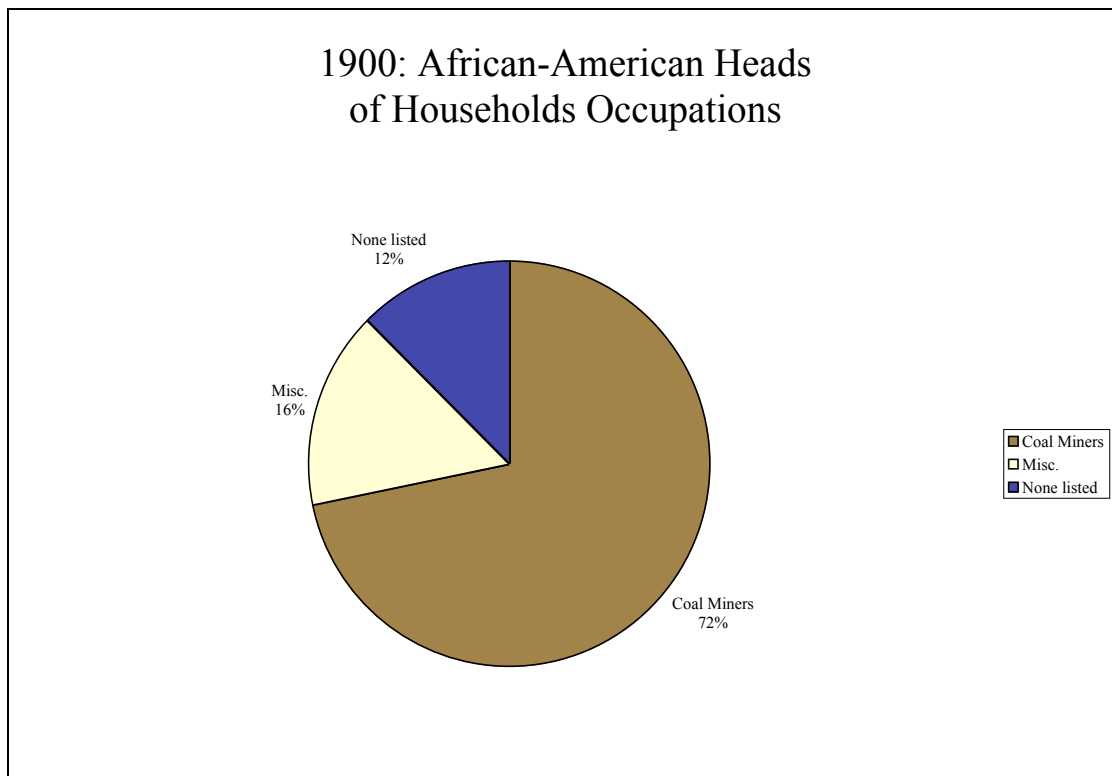
Professions outside of mining and farming included those of saloonkeeper, barber, blacksmith, dry goods sales, butcher, physician and grocer. These positions were represented in both the white and African-American heads of households. One distinction between white and African-Americans is the percentage of coal mining and mining related positions. When separated by race, white heads of households held a lower percentage (49 %) of coal mining positions than African Americans at 72 %.



Heads of household's occupations were predominantly (57 %) related to the coal mining industry. Another 20 % was comprised of miscellaneous occupations.



When separated by race, white heads of households were less likely to hold positions in the coal mining industry than African Americans.



African-American heads of households were more likely (72 %) to list their occupation as coal miner or mine laborer than whites.

1900: Adult Children and Extended Family Members

In addition to heads of households and boarders, there were a large number of adult children and extended family members who contributed to Rendville's workforce in 1900. There were 88 adult children and extended family members who worked in the coal industry, plus another 38 in miscellaneous professions.

Conclusion: 1900 Population Profile

The demographic composition of Rendville changed dramatically from 1880 to 1900. As Rendville was still under construction in the early 1880s, coal mining and construction-related occupations figured prominently. Twenty years later, coal mining was still the majority employment title, but other occupational titles such as physician, barber, housekeeper and farmer helped to create a more diverse workplace.

In 1880, boarders comprised over 30 % of the population but by 1900, this number had dropped to less than 5 %. This may be attributed to the lack of housing during that period or to the transient nature of early-stage coal towns. Heads of households increased in number and there was a slight increase in the number of families with children.

Nativity also changed during the twenty-year period. In 1880, over half of Rendville's boarders and heads of households were foreign born. By 1900, only 13 % of boarders and 27 % of heads of households were foreign born.