
Black Migration to Muncie, 1860–1930

*Jack S. Blocker, Jr.**

In the dominant historical image of African-American migration, great cities such as Chicago and New York appear as powerful magnets. Acknowledging the attractive power of big cities need not prevent one, however, from recognizing the place of smaller urban communities in the migration process. Such communities tend to be ignored when historians focus their investigations on the largest cities. Yet during the quarter century after Emancipation, many black migrants to the North found their way to small towns and cities.¹ Moreover, some African Americans continued to migrate to small cities even when thousands of others traveled to New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, and other major cities in the mass exodus from the South after 1915 known as the first Great Migration. A few nonconformists even forsook big cities for smaller ones. Thinking of migration as synonymous with big-city urbanization not only effaces the choices made by migrants who settled in small cities and the results of their decisions; it also unduly homogenizes a black folk movement and tends to shift the interpretive focus from the folk who made the movement to the forces that acted upon them.

Indiana furnishes useful examples of African-American migration to places other than large cities. In a state with only one metropolis, both black and white migrants to the country towns and small cities that dotted the Hoosier landscape could find jobs and

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¹Kenneth L. Kusmer, "The Black Urban Experience in American History," in *The State of Afro-American History: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine (Baton Rouge, 1986), 99. Recent studies of African-American migration include Peter Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way: Southern Blacks' Migration to Pittsburgh, 1916–1930* (Urbana, Ill., 1987) and James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago, 1989).

urban amenities without completely abandoning their rural roots. This study focuses on one such community, Muncie. For the purpose of understanding African-American migration, Muncie represents not a typical northern or midwestern community but a specific blend of historical circumstances. Examining those circumstances can cast light on the choices made by African-American migrants during the period from the Civil War to the Great Depression. The Magic City was unique only in the same way that every place is. The characteristics that define it can be found to varying degrees in other communities.

Muncie is best known as the "Middletown" of Robert and Helen Merrell Lynd's sociological classic of the 1920s. The Lynds may have contributed to the scholarly neglect of small-city black communities. They explicitly chose Muncie as a subject for study because in their view it had a small black population. The Lynds wanted a community that was both representative and ethnically homogeneous.² Homogeneity, in the Lynds' eyes, required "a small Negro and foreign-born population."³ In addition to its apparent ethnic homogeneity, Muncie was attractive to the Lynds because it was an industrial city. *Middletown* portrayed industrialization as the driving force of many twentieth-century cultural changes.

The Lynds were correct in portraying Muncie as an industrial city peopled by few immigrants. A close reader of *Middletown*, however, would have noted that in the third of a century before the Lynds began their study Muncie's black community grew substantially. During this time, the overall population mushroomed from about 11,000 to more than 35,000. The African-American segment of that population, meanwhile, increased from less than 4 percent to nearly 6 percent.⁴ Thus, during a period of rapid population growth the city's black population grew at a faster rate than its white population. This study probes that phenomenon. First, the expansion of Muncie's black population will be traced from the Civil War to the onset of the Great Depression and placed in the contexts

²In the aftermath of massive European immigration and in the age of African Americans' Great Migration to the North, it was, of course, impossible to find a northern city that was both ethnically homogenous and representative. Richard Jensen, "The Lynds Revisited," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXV (December, 1979), 306.

³Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York, 1929), 7-8.

⁴Lynd and Lynd, *Middletown*, 9. Richard Jensen has noted that during the 1920s Muncie had "a slightly higher proportion of blacks than was usual in the Midwest." Jensen, "The Lynds Revisited," 306. In 1920, the 2,054 African Americans in Muncie represented the fifth largest black community in the state of Indiana. Muncie had the third highest percentage of blacks (tied with Richmond behind Evansville and Gary) among the eleven Indiana cities in its size category (25,000-99,999). The percentage of blacks in Muncie's population had risen from 3.7 in 1890 to 5.6 in 1920. Total population rose from 11,345 in 1890 to 36,524 in 1920. See Table 3 below. U.S., *Fourteenth Census, 1920: Vol. II, Population*, 63-64.

of black population growth in Indiana and African Americans' changing distribution in the state's urban hierarchy. Second, the nature of the black migration experience will be explored through the use of oral-history evidence. Finally, although the principal purpose of this essay is descriptive, possible reasons for Muncie's appeal to African-American migrants will be examined.

The pace of African-American migration to Indiana varied considerably during the period from 1860 to 1930 (see Table 1).⁵ In the 1860s about 11,000 blacks, mostly former slaves, entered the state despite white violence directed against them and the presence until 1867 of a black exclusion law. Most probably came during the war and in the year or two immediately after its end, before Radical Reconstruction began to give southern blacks hope of making new lives in the South free from white domination.⁶ While the struggles over Reconstruction raged in the 1870s and 1880s, black migration occurred at a slower pace. It then quickened again during the 1890s.⁷ The flow diminished once more in the first decade of the twentieth century, but a new and much larger wave began about 1915. During World War I and continuing through the 1920s, the Indiana stream of the first Great Migration brought more than 50,000 African Americans to the state. Thus, black migration to Indiana fluctuated greatly. In nearly all census decades, however, Indiana's black population grew more rapidly than its white population, since white out-migration consistently exceeded black in-migration.⁸

⁵ The figures given in Tables 1 through 4 should be viewed as no more than rough approximations, given the inaccuracies of the federal census and the estimation methods used. The federal census clearly underenumerated African Americans, although the frequency with which it did so probably declined somewhat during the period under consideration. Net migration for Indiana in Table 1 is estimated using a forward census-survival method, in which age-specific survival ratios from one census year to the next are calculated for the United States and then applied to age cohorts within the states to estimate net migration. See John B. Sharpless and Ray M. Shortridge, "Biased Underenumeration in Census Manuscripts: Methodological Implications," *Journal of Urban History*, 1 (August, 1975), 409-39; Everett S. Lee *et al.*, *Methodological Considerations and Reference Tables*, in *Population Redistribution and Economic Growth, United States, 1870-1950*, eds. Simon Kuznets and Dorothy Swaine Thomas (3 vols., Philadelphia, 1957-1964), I, 15-56.

⁶ The best recent account is Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York, 1988). The principal source of black migrants to Indiana, however, was Kentucky, which did not experience Reconstruction. See Lee *et al.*, *Methodological Considerations and Reference Tables*, 311. The best treatment of the freedpeople's northern migration of the 1860s is in Michael P. Johnson, "Out of Egypt: The Migration of Former Slaves to the Midwest During the 1860s in Comparative Perspective" (Paper presented at the Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora Symposium, East Lansing, Michigan, April, 1995), cited by permission.

⁷ Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900: A Study of a Minority* (2nd ed., Bloomington, 1993), chapters 7-8.

⁸ Hope T. Eldridge and Dorothy Swaine Thomas, *Demographic Analyses and Interrelations*, in *Population Redistribution and Economic Growth*, III, 93.

Table 1
 Black Population of Indiana
 and Estimated Black In-Migration, 1860–1930

Year	Total Population	Black Population	Black Percentage	Estimated Net Black In-Migration in Previous Decade
1860	1,350,428	11,428	0.8	
1870	1,680,637	24,560	1.5	11,000
1880	1,978,301	39,228	2.0	8,000
1890	2,192,404	45,215	2.1	4,000
1900	2,516,462	57,505	2.3	10,000
1910	2,700,876	60,320	2.2	5,000
1920	2,930,390	80,810	2.8	24,000
1930	3,238,503	111,982	3.5	27,000

Sources: Michael P. Johnson, "Out of Egypt: The Migration of Former Slaves to the Midwest During the 1860s in Comparative Perspective" (Paper presented at the Comparative History of Black People in Diaspora Symposium; East Lansing, Mich., April, 1995); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negroes in the United States, 1790–1915* (Washington, D.C., 1918), 43–45; U.S., *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1932, 8–9, 14–15; Hope T. Eldridge and Dorothy Swaine Thomas, *Demographic Analyses and Interrelations*, in *Population Redistribution and Economic Growth, United States, 1870–1950*, eds. Simon Kuznets and Dorothy Swaine Thomas (3 vols., Philadelphia, 1957–1964), I, 260.

African-American migrants, whether moving into or within the state, distributed themselves throughout Indiana's landscape in quite different ways before and after 1890. Before 1890, more blacks lived in small towns and cities (43 percent of the total black population) than in rural areas (36 percent) or in Indianapolis (20 percent). Black Hoosiers were more urbanized than their white counterparts (see Table 2). Blacks' greater degree of urbanization was caused not only by a higher concentration of the African-American population in Indianapolis, but also by higher concentrations at every level of community size. Blacks' lower concentration in rural areas was probably the result of most blacks' being newcomers to the state at a time when rising land values and new machinery costs during the late nineteenth century made entry into Indiana's mature agricultural economy increasingly difficult.⁹

⁹ For a discussion of Indiana agriculture during the late nineteenth century, see James H. Madison, *The Indiana Way: A State History* (Bloomington, 1986), 147–53; Clifton J. Phillips, *Indiana in Transition: The Emergence of an Industrial Commonwealth, 1880–1920* (Indianapolis, 1968), chapter 4. In the long-established black rural communities of the Beech and Roberts settlements, access to viable farms largely determined who stayed and who migrated. Stephen Anthony Vincent, "African-Americans in the Rural Midwest: The Origins and Evolution of Beech and Roberts Settlements, ca. 1830–1900" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brown University, 1991), 246–55. See also Frederick A. Karst, "A Rural Black Settlement in St. Joseph County, Indiana, before 1900," *Indiana Magazine of History*, LXXIV (September, 1978), 252–67; Thornbrough, *Negro in Indiana*, 206.

Table 2

Blacks and Whites in Indiana's Urban Hierarchy, 1890-1910

Size Category	Places		1890			
	1890	1910	White	Percent of Whites	Black	Percent of Blacks
100,000+	1	1	96,282	4.5	9,133	20.3
25,000-99,999	3	4	109,416	5.1	6,916	15.4
10,000-24,999	10	20	137,989	6.5	5,926	13.2
2,500-9,999	46	63	208,420	9.7	6,591	14.7
Rural			1,585,687	74.2	16,376	36.4
Total urban			552,107		28,566	
Total			2,137,794		44,942	

Size Category	1910		Percent			
	White	Percent of Whites	Change	Black	Percent of Blacks	Change
100,000+	211,780	8.0	120.0	21,816	36.2	138.9
25,000-99,999	235,288	8.9	115.0	10,035	16.6	45.1
10,000-24,999	330,900	12.5	139.8	8,953	14.8	51.1
2,500-9,999	317,058	12.0	52.1	7,621	12.6	15.6
Rural	1,544,935	58.5	-2.6	11,895	19.7	-27.4
Total urban	1,095,026		98.3	48,425		69.5
Total	2,639,961		23.5	60,320		34.2

Sources: U.S., *Eleventh Census, 1890*: Vol. I, *Population*, 451-85; U.S., *Thirteenth Census, 1910*: Vol. I, *Population*, 191, 201; *ibid.*, Vol. III, *Population*, 418-25, 504-11, 566-72.

After 1890, African Americans in Indiana began a decisive shift up the urban ladder. The rural black population declined by one-quarter between 1890 and 1910, while the black population of the smallest towns (less than 10,000 population) grew more slowly than did the state's black population as a whole. Black urbanization was most evident in Indianapolis, where the African-American population more than doubled over the twenty-year period. Most striking, it was only in the largest size category (Indianapolis) that the black population grew faster than the white. In country towns and small cities after 1890, white populations continued to grow, while black populations lagged. For small towns and small cities considered as a whole, Table 1 and Table 2 together imply relative growth in black population before 1890 followed by a relative decline that set in over the following twenty years. New Albany exemplifies the trend. There, blacks increased from 5 percent of total population in 1860 to 9 percent by 1890, but then both black numbers and their proportion of the community total fell over the next twenty years. Farther north, the number of African Americans in Lafayette more than doubled between 1860 and 1890 (from 133 to 304), but twenty years later only 34 more blacks were living in the community, which suggests that out-migration had surpassed both in-migration and natural increase. In New Castle, the percentage of black popu-

lation grew from 3.3 in 1860 to 6.7 thirty years later. It then declined to 2.2 percent by 1910. The pattern of African-American movement to large cities, a pattern that first appeared during the 1890s, was to reappear during the first Great Migration of 1915–1930 and again in the second Great Migration of 1940–1970, both of which were characterized by black migration directly from the rural or urban South to the big-city North.¹⁰

Muncie's black population, tiny in 1860, grew steadily over the next thirty years in common with the black populations of many other Indiana small towns (see Table 3). During the 1890s blacks' share of total population fell from 3.7 percent to 3.5 percent. This percentage decline was not caused by a declining, stable, or even slowly growing black population. Instead, the number of black Munsonians increased substantially during the 1890s (77 percent), a fact that strongly suggests that in-migration to the community far outpaced out-migration.¹¹ African Americans' relative decline was the result of rapidly expanding white population, which grew by 85 percent during the decade.

Muncie's population explosion was the result of a spectacular economic bonanza, the natural gas boom that began in northeastern Indiana during the mid-1880s. Lured by the prospect of cheap or even free gas to power their plants, many manufacturers moved to the region, and the ensuing factory growth contributed substantially to the state's industrialization. The gas boom accelerated a northward shift of the state's industrial center of gravity from the

¹⁰ Carole Marks, *Farewell—We're Good and Gone: The Great Black Migration* (Bloomington, 1989), 1-2; Peter Gottlieb, "Rethinking the Great Migration: A Perspective from Pittsburgh," in *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender*, ed. Joe William Trotter, Jr. (Bloomington, 1991), 69-70; Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York, 1991).

¹¹ Population growth is necessarily used as an indicator of migration, since I cannot distinguish the contributions to population growth of natural increase and migration. This cannot be done because the necessary data are not available. One method for determining rates of interstate migration, a procedure that involves counting those living in a state during a given census year who were born in other states, is not suitable for use with smaller units than states, since such a measure will omit intrastate migrants. Other methods, which depend upon use of survival ratios drawn from either census data or life tables, require breakdowns of community population by age, sex, and "color" to measure migration by blacks and whites. Such data are available for communities only from intensive analysis of the manuscript census for every census year covered by the study. Such an analysis is impossible for any period including the census year 1890, for which manuscript census data for most states (including Indiana) were destroyed in a fire. Lee *et al.*, *Methodological Considerations and Reference Tables*, 15-64; J. Dennis Willigan and Katherine A. Lynch, *Sources and Methods of Historical Demography* (New York, 1982), 102-104, 215-21. Nevertheless, the contribution of migration to Muncie's black population in 1920 can be indicated by analysis of a sample of adult African Americans living in the community in that year. Only 27 of 384 were both natives of Indiana and had been living in Muncie ten years earlier. That is, a maximum of 7 percent of the sample could have been native Munsonians. For the sampling methodology, see below.

Table 3**Black Population of Muncie, 1860–1930**

Year	Total Population	Black Population	Black Percentage
1860	1,782	16	0.9
1870	2,992	48	1.6
1880	5,219	187	3.6
1890	11,345	418	3.7
1900	20,942	739	3.5
1910	24,005	1,005	4.2
1920	36,524	2,054	5.6
1930	46,548	2,646	5.7

Sources: Joseph C. G. Kennedy, *Population of the United States in 1860* (Washington, D. C., 1864), 116; U.S., *Tenth Census, 1880: Vol. I, Population*, 418; U.S., *Eleventh Census, 1890: Vol. I, Population*, 457; U.S., *Fourteenth Census, 1920: Vol. II, Population*, 63; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negroes in the United States, 1920–1932* (Washington, D.C., 1935), 58.

Ohio River counties to the central and northern regions of the state.¹² In addition to placing Muncie and its sister cities of the Gas Belt on the leading edge of Indiana's industrial expansion, the gas boom also shielded them from the worst effects of the catastrophic depression of the 1890s.

Among the manufacturers attracted to Muncie during the gas boom were five brothers named Ball who had been making glass jars in Buffalo, New York. Muncie's city fathers enticed the brothers with an offer of free gas, a seven-acre property, and \$5,000 in cash. They moved in 1887 and began manufacturing their patented glass jars the next year. By 1900, aided by extensive mechanization of the production process, the Ball Company had become the nation's largest manufacturer of fruit jars. Another glass manufacturer, the Hemingray Glass Company, moved to Muncie from Covington, Kentucky, in the same year as the Balls and soon became a leading manufacturer of insulators for the nation's rapidly spreading network of telephone poles.¹³ Natural gas, which allowed the production of good quality glass from impure materials, was crucial to the relocation and expansion of glass manufacturers. Natural gas also facilitated expansion of already existing foundries and steel wire factories in Muncie.¹⁴

After 1900 Muncie's explosive population growth moderated, although it still surpassed the anemic growth rate which character-

¹² Phillips, *Indiana in Transition*, 192–202, 276; Scott Ray, "The Depressed Industrial Society: Occupational Movement, Out-Migration and Residential Mobility in the Industrial-Urbanization of Middletown, 1880–1925" (Ph.D. dissertation, Ball State University, 1981), 125–31.

¹³ Phillips, *Indiana in Transition*, 297–300.

¹⁴ Ray, "Depressed Industrial Society," 127.

ized the state as a whole. Black population grew more slowly than during the 1890s, but its rate of growth did not slow as much as that of whites. The result was that the black share of Muncie's population rose from 3.5 to 4.2 percent. With Muncie's growth accelerating during the 1910s, blacks again moved to Muncie at a faster rate than whites, a performance they repeated—unnoticed by the Lynds—during the 1920s.

This brief review of Muncie's population history reveals that the community's African-American migration was unusual. It did not follow the pattern of many other Indiana small towns and small cities over the long period from the Civil War to the onset of the Great Depression, a pattern of a rising followed by a falling percentage of black population. Muncie's special character was particularly apparent during the crucial period for black urbanization, 1890–1910. While the black population of towns in its size category (10,000–24,999) grew by 51 percent, Muncie's African-American population rose by 140 percent. The Magic City's appeal was evident both during a decade of massive white population growth—the 1890s—and during the succeeding decade of slower growth in both Muncie's white population and the state's black population. Muncie's nearly constant ability to attract black migrants at a faster rate than white migrants over the entire seventy-year period produced a pattern of relative black population growth that resembled the trend found in the state's largest city (see Figure 1). Black migration to Muncie created by 1920 an African-American community that was larger as a proportion of overall population than black communities in such major northern cities as Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, and New York.¹⁵

The description of black migration to Muncie thus far has been based upon federal census records. Those records display the external aspects of the migration process, but they cannot reveal the perceptions or motivations of those who migrated. Moreover, they cannot provide more than a snapshot every ten years of the distribution of population, a picture from which migration patterns must be inferred. Oral-history evidence can offer more, and such evidence has played a prominent part in recent studies of black migration north.¹⁶

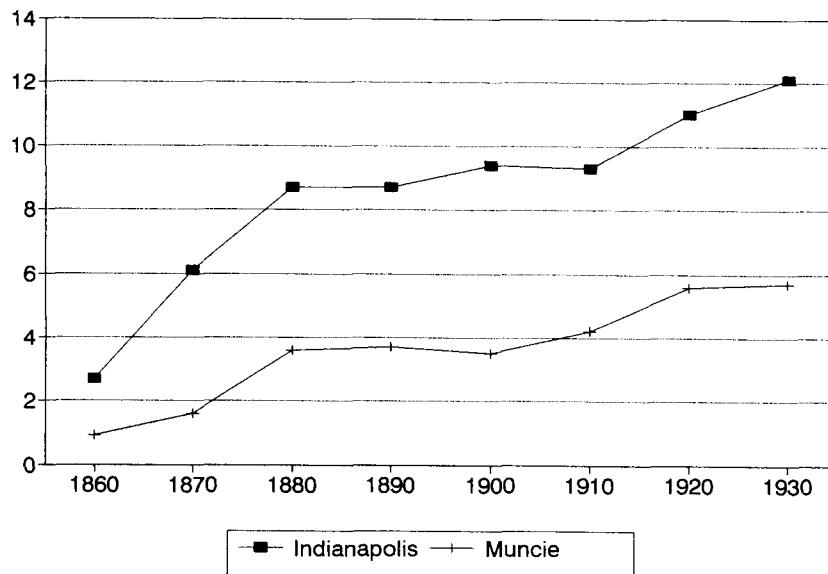
Fortunately, oral-history evidence is available for investigation of migration to Muncie. The interviews of former slaves conducted by the Federal Writers' Project during 1937 and 1938 include twelve testimonies by black Munsonians, and more than

¹⁵ U.S., Bureau of the Census, *Negroes in the United States, 1920–1932* (Washington, D.C., 1935), 55.

¹⁶ Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way*; John Bodnar, Roger Simon, and Michael P. Weber, *Lives of Their Own: Blacks, Italians, and Poles in Pittsburgh, 1900–1960* (Urbana, 1982); Grossman, *Land of Hope*; E. Marvin Goodwin, *Black Migration in America from 1915 to 1960: An Uneasy Exodus* (Lewiston, N. Y., 1990).

Figure 1

Blacks as a Percentage of Population
Indianapolis and Muncie



Sources: Emma Lou Thornbrough, *The Negro in Indiana Before 1900* (2nd ed., Bloomington, 1993), 229, 392; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negroes in the United States, 1790–1915*, 74; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Negroes in the United States, 1920–1932*, 58. See also Table 3.

half of these contain information about the migration experience.¹⁷ Around 1980, the Black Middletown Project, under the direction of Rutledge Dennis and Vivian Gordon, interviewed thirty-three elderly African-American residents of Muncie. Another project, the Muncie Black History Project, interviewed three more. This study draws on twenty-six of these interviews (seven from the Federal Writers' Project series and nineteen from the Black Middletown and Muncie Black History projects) to identify patterns in the migration experiences of those who came to Muncie before and during the first Great Migration. These interviews should not be regarded as constituting a statistically representative sample of all migrants, since the numbers involved are small and it is not known how informants were selected. Nevertheless, the interviews provide

¹⁷ Nearly all the Muncie interviews were conducted by William Webb Tuttle. See George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Supplement, Series 1*; Vol. V, *Indiana and Ohio Narratives*. Two other volumes (*Series 1*, Vol. VI, and *Supplement, Series 2*, Vol. I) also contain interviews with black Muncionians, but these either do not bear on the migration experience or duplicate other testimony.

the best evidence available on black migration to Muncie from the perspectives of the migrants themselves.

The earliest migrant interviewed came to Muncie in 1886, the latest during the 1930s. Of twenty-seven migrants or families represented by an interviewee, fifteen arrived before 1915, when the first Great Migration began. The remainder came after that date, with the bulk of the second group arriving during the 1920s. Of the pre-1915 cohort, all those who came from outside Indiana were from states of the Upper South: Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina. In the Great Migration group, a majority also originated in the Upper South (Kentucky and Tennessee), but the Deep South was represented by two migrant families from Alabama and one from Arkansas. This profile is broadly consistent with general patterns of migration to the Midwest. The states of the Upper South provided most of the migrants to the region from the Civil War to World War I, while the first Great Migration consisted largely of former residents of the Lower South.¹⁸ Muncie in 1920, as a sample from the manuscript census shows, represented a variant on the statewide pattern of black origins. In both Muncie and the state, Kentuckians represented the largest single out-of-state group. Muncie, however, attracted more migrants from Ohio, North Carolina, and Virginia and fewer from Alabama and Georgia than the statewide norm (see Figures 2 and 3).¹⁹ The significant northern component in Muncie's immigrant stream strongly suggests that the Magic City appealed to migrants from small midwestern towns and cities as well as to newcomers to the North.²⁰

For those interviewed, the journey to Muncie was typically a family migration. Whether the migrant traveled as a child or as an adult, the trip was usually taken either in the company of family members or with the intention of joining at least one family member already in Muncie.²¹ Family migration minimized the disrupt-

¹⁸ Louise V. Kennedy, *The Negro Peasant Turns Cityward: Effects of Recent Migrations to Northern Centers* (New York, 1930), 29-30; Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 32-33; William Cohen, *At Freedom's Edge: Black Mobility and the Southern White Quest for Racial Control, 1861-1915* (Baton Rouge, La., 1991), 103-104; Emma Lou Thornbrough, "Segregation in Indiana during the Klan Era of the 1920's," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XLVII (March, 1961), 595-96.

¹⁹ The sample consisted of 384 adults (aged twenty-one years or over; 203 men and 181 women) recorded from randomly selected pages from Muncie's twenty-one census enumeration districts in its nine wards. The sample was designed to reflect the proportion of black population in each ward and enumeration district. U.S., Fourteenth Census, 1920, Population schedules for Delaware County, Indiana. Data on migrant origins for Muncie are not available for any date past 1920.

²⁰ Muncie historians Hurley Goodall and J. Paul Mitchell report that many of Muncie's early twentieth-century black migrants came from smaller communities in eastern Indiana and western Ohio and provide several examples of such families. A *History of Negroes in Muncie* (Muncie, Ind., 1976), 9-10.

²¹ One modern study concludes, "Family ties play a considerable part in geographic mobility." John B. Lansing and Eva Mueller, *The Geographic Mobility of Labor* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1967), 338. See also Daniel O. Price and Melanie M. Sikes, *Rural-Urban Migration Research in the United States: Annotated Bibliography and Synthesis* (Washington, D.C., 1975), 14.

tion of relocating as well as the shock of arrival in new surroundings. Sometimes the aid given by extended family members was directly instrumental, such as the offering of lodging for new arrivals. In other cases it was indirect, in the form of information about the journey or about conditions at the destination. Both forms of aid could be provided by friends as well as family. Few migrants arrived completely alone in their new surroundings. Most migrated within chains of family and friends.²²

The predominance of chain migration suggests that many migrants accumulated a stock of knowledge prior to uprooting themselves from their homes. Those who had family or friends at a potential destination were likely to know the prospects for jobs, housing, and education and to be aware of the state of race relations before setting off. Their decision to migrate, that is, was likely to be an informed one.²³ Even without access to a chain of family and friends, however, migrants could still acquire knowledge of their potential new homes. The case of Muncie migrant Elam F. illustrates this point. He came directly to Muncie from rural Tennessee in 1913. Traveling alone and having no friends or family in Muncie, he came because he had heard he could get work in "the glass factory," probably either the Ball Brothers glass jar factory or the Hemingray Glass Company plant.²⁴ In their degree of foreknowledge, African-American migrants during the early twentieth century were typical of migrants and immigrants in general. As a recent historian notes, "Rarely [did they] leave home without a clear idea of where they were going and how they would get there."²⁵

The railroad provided the means of travel for most of the interviewed migrants who indicated how they came to Muncie. This fact reflected the centrality of the railroads to America's transportation system during the period between the Civil War and World War II and their presence throughout the nation. When asked how she and her family left their home in the country, one

²² This is consistent with the findings of modern migration research. As a summary reports, "virtually all studies of migration find that the destination is chosen on the basis of friends and relatives." Price and Sikes, *Rural-Urban Migration Research*, 14-15. See also Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 99. This finding should not be read as meaning that choice of destination was governed solely by the presence of family or friends at that destination. A migrant may have had such connections in more than one possible destination.

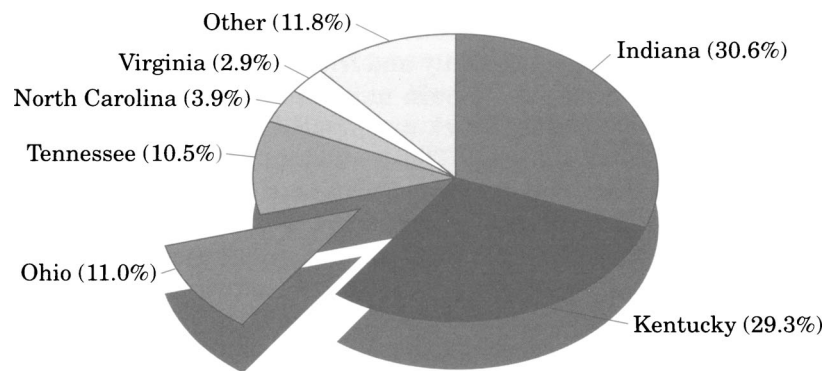
²³ Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 89-94; Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way*, 49-51; Marks, *Farewell—We're Good and Gone*, 24-25.

²⁴ Elam F., interview, no date, Black Middletown Project (Special Collections, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana). The Black Middletown Project is cited hereafter as BMP.

²⁵ Joshua L. Rosenbloom, "Looking for Work, Searching for Workers: U.S. Labor Markets After the Civil War," *Social Science History*, XVIII (Fall, 1994), 377-403; Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 99; Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way*, chapter 2; Gottlieb, "Rethinking the Great Migration," 72. The likelihood of foreknowledge would have been enhanced by the fact that so many Muncie migrants came from Indiana or adjacent states.

Figure 2

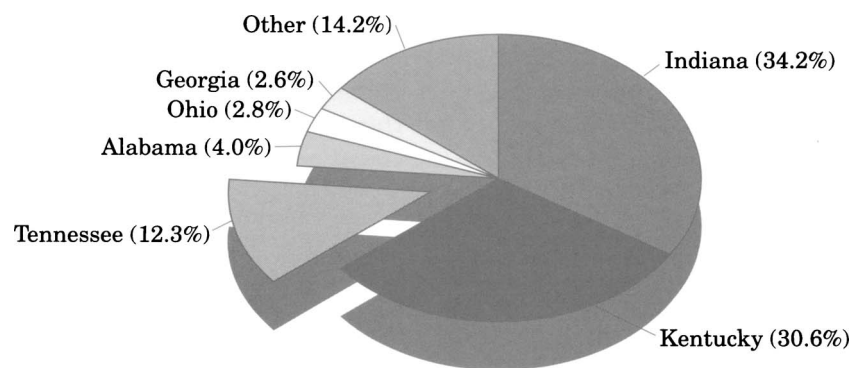
Origins of Native-Born Black
Population, Muncie, 1920



Source: U.S., *Fourteenth Census, 1920*: Vol. II, *Population*, 636-40.

Figure 3

Origins of Native-Born Black
Population, Indiana, 1920



Source: Sample from U.S., *Fourteenth Census, 1920*, Population Schedules for Delaware County, Indiana.

migrant replied: "On the train. Nothing else going through there but the train."²⁶ Muncie was relatively well served by the railroads during the period of the first Great Migration. In the 1890s, Muncie's three passenger services were provided by east-west lines, so that transfers were necessary for migrants coming directly from the South. The Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis—colloquially known as the "Big Four"—operated three trains each day to Muncie from St. Louis, an important transfer point for travel by both river and rail.²⁷ By 1930, three major railways operated passenger services to and from the Magic City: the Chesapeake and Ohio, whose lines tapped Kentucky, West Virginia, and Virginia and connected Muncie twice daily with Cincinnati and Chicago; the Big Four, which now ran seven passenger trains each day from St. Louis; and the New York, Chicago, and St. Louis (the "Nickel Plate Road"), which also linked Muncie with major northern and southern transfer points.²⁸

Many of the migrant families discussed in the oral-history projects farmed before leaving the South. Some migrants, however, had been skilled workers, such as a shoe repairman and a brickmason. Peter Gottlieb has argued that many migrants had previous exposure in the South to industrialization. Gottlieb emphasizes the importance of labor in southern industries in "providing [for migrants] a transition from farming to industrial labor."²⁹ The Muncie interviews lend support to this view, as a significant minority revealed earlier experience with factory work. James D. had worked in a factory in Indianapolis before moving to Muncie in 1926 to work at Indiana Foundry. The father of James L., who came to Muncie during the 1930s from Knoxville, Tennessee, had worked in a steel mill. James himself found work in a foundry in Muncie. The father of Joseph W., a minister who traveled to Muncie in 1928 from Alabama, had combined his ministerial vocation with working in a sawmill and "around the mines."³⁰ Another migrant's father had been employed in a factory in Chattanooga, Tennessee, before migrating in 1923 to work at the Broderick boiler factory. His daughter related in her interview that she had worked in Muncie at

²⁶ Mrs. Lelia D., interview, June 20, 1980, BMP.

²⁷ *Travelers' Official Railway Guide for the United States and Canada* . . . (June, 1893), 208-17, 408-409. This publication and the guide cited in note 28 were long-running periodicals published monthly. They were not numbered by volume but can be located by month and year.

²⁸ *Official Guide of the Railways and Steam Navigation Lines of the United States, Porto Rico, Canada, Mexico and Cuba* . . . (January, 1930).

²⁹ Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way*, 22-24, 118-19. See also Marks, *Farewell—We're Good and Gone*.

³⁰ Historian Joe William Trotter, Jr., argues that extractive industries such as mining and lumbering "operated at the interface between the black agricultural experience . . . and the black transition to an urban-industrial foundation." Joe William Trotter, Jr., *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-45* (Urbana, Ill., 1985), 232.

the factory of the Butterfield Canning Company.³¹ Another father, who had begun his travels from a Kentucky farm, arrived in Muncie in 1904 after working in a factory in Peru, Indiana. He was able to put his industrial experience to use in a Muncie factory.³²

These examples suggest that although the overall direction of African-American movement has been from rural to urban places, it would be a mistake to think of Muncie's black migrants as encountering urban life for the first time on the streets of the Magic City. Even those whose backgrounds included no previous industrial experience might have stopped in other towns or cities, in the South or the North, before traveling on to Muncie. The fact that a large proportion of Muncie's 1920 black population was either northern-born or from the more urbanized southern states supports this possibility. Articulating a widely held view of black urbanization as a disruptive, disorienting, and alienating experience, Richard Wright wrote in 1941: "Perhaps never in history has a more utterly unprepared folk wanted to go to the city."³³ The Muncie evidence, together with evidence presented by recent historians, throws a long shadow of doubt over that view.

The oral-history material also indicates that some migrants chose Muncie not as a step on their way to a bigger place but as a more desirable destination than a large city. Chicago's South Side in 1929 contained the Midwest's largest and culturally most vibrant black community, but after a few months there the mother of Esterine M. chose to depart for Muncie. She wanted to join her parents, who had preceded her from Arkansas, but she may also have perceived Muncie as a satisfactory alternative to the midwestern metropolis.³⁴ Versia A. lived in Indianapolis for eight years during her twenties before moving to two smaller Michigan cities. She then traveled to Muncie in 1934.³⁵ A decade earlier, James D. made the same decision to migrate to Muncie after living for at least nine years in Indianapolis during his teens and early twenties.³⁶ The beginnings of the gas boom drew thirty-one-year-old Alexander Kelley, a chef in Indianapolis's Grant Hotel, and his new wife, twenty-nine-year-old Bell, to Muncie in 1886. Alexander Kelley had lived in Indianapolis for thirteen years and Bell for even longer.³⁷ At the time of their decision, the black community in Indianapolis numbered more than 6,500, proportionally the largest of any midwest-

³¹ Mrs. Jimmie S., interview, no date, BMP.

³² John L., interview, no date, *ibid.*

³³ Richard Wright, *Twelve Million Black Voices* (New York, 1941), 93, quoted in Gottlieb, *Making Their Own Way*, 220.

³⁴ Esterine M., interview, no date, BMP.

³⁵ Versia A., interview, no date, *ibid.*

³⁶ James D., interview, June 6, 1980, *ibid.*

³⁷ Rawick, *American Slave, Supplement, Series 1*, V, 104-107.



AFRICAN-AMERICAN RESIDENTS OF MUNCIE IN THE 1930S

Ball State University, A. M. Bracken Library,
Archives and Special Collections, Spurgeon-Greene Photo Collection



ern big city, while less than four hundred blacks lived in Muncie.³⁸ Spurning the attractions of big-city life as well as the advantages offered by a large black community, these migrants joined those coming from smaller places to form Muncie's migrant stream.

Researchers typically measure migration using cross-sectional measures that identify the places that lost population and those that gained. They then infer migration from the first sort of place to the second. Interviews make possible a view over time that produces a quite different image of the migration process, a much more complicated and less linear portrait. While most migrants who described their path came directly from the South to Muncie, some followed circuitous routes. Lelia D., born in 1890 in Germantown, North Carolina, took a parabolic course, first to Maryland, then to Heightstown, New Jersey, then to Reading, Pennsylvania, and finally in 1910 to Muncie.³⁹ James D., born in Tennessee in 1903, traveled to Texas and then back to Tennessee. He moved to Indianapolis in 1915, then to New Albany, Indiana, for two years, and then back to Indianapolis before settling in Muncie in 1926.⁴⁰ Finally, Versia A. moved from rural Kentucky to Bowling Green, Kentucky, at the age of sixteen and then to Indianapolis four years later. After eight years living in Indianapolis, she moved to Pontiac, Michigan, but after one year moved to Flint, Michigan. A little more than a year later, she went back to Pontiac and then finally moved to Muncie in 1934.⁴¹ These zigzag routes should lead one to think of migration not as a linear phenomenon in which each migrant moved directly from the rural South to the urban North but as a constant flux. At any given time some people were moving south, east, and west, while others were going north. Some were migrating from larger places to smaller places, while many others were shifting from rural to urban environments. While the general tendency for African Americans was to move from the rural South and the rural and small-town North to urban centers, this path did not describe the course taken by every migrant.⁴²

Researchers studying the "push" factors behind African-American migration from the South have not reached a consensus. While some emphasize economic motivations—the difficulty of supporting a family in a society where blacks controlled few resources—others add to this model the force of social and political oppression.⁴³

³⁸ The percentage of blacks in Indianapolis in 1880 was 8.7 percent; in Columbus, Ohio, 5.8; in Cincinnati, 3.2; in Chicago, 1.3; in Cleveland, 1.3. U.S., *Eleventh Census, 1890*: Vol. 1, *Population*, 451-85.

³⁹ Lelia D., interview, June 20, 1980, BMP.

⁴⁰ James D., interview, June 6, 1980, *ibid.*

⁴¹ Versia A., interview, no date, *ibid.*

⁴² A similar warning is presented in Lee *et al.*, *Methodological Considerations and Reference Tables*, 58.

⁴³ Kennedy, *Negro Peasant Turns Cityward*, chapter 2; Daniel M. Johnson and Rex R. Campbell, *Black Migration in America: A Social Demographic History* (Durham, N. C., 1981), 64-66, 79-88.

Unfortunately, the Muncie migrants spoke little of their reasons for leaving their former homes. While some implicitly suggested economic motivations in noting the appeal of potential jobs in Muncie,⁴⁴ others explicitly identified social or political causes for migration. Two families came to Muncie as a result of their church ties, while a third family emigrated from Kentucky in 1907 "on account of the Ku Klux Klan."⁴⁵

When African-American migrants explained why they moved to Muncie, they most often said that they came for jobs. They came because a sister had said that good wages were to be had in Muncie⁴⁶ or so a father could find work in a marble factory.⁴⁷ In many cases, the jobs they sought materialized. Men told of how they found work in Muncie's factories: in the Broderick boiler factory, in foundries such as the Whitely Malleable Castings Company, at the Indiana Steel and Wire plant, at the glass factories of Ball Brothers and Hemingray, and at the Chevrolet plant.

The migrants' stories of finding work in factories reflected the experience of Muncie's black work force as a whole. The 1889 city directory reveals that at this early date blacks were gaining access to industrial employment. Nearly one-quarter of "colored" males listed with occupations held jobs in factories. Other men worked as artisans, and some owned businesses. Four of Muncie's ten barber shops, for example, were owned by black proprietors, evidence which implies that these shops depended upon a white or mixed black and white clientele. Only three women were listed with occupations. One of these three advertised herself as Muncie's only carpet weaver, while another worked in a commercial laundry.⁴⁸

In the 1920 census sample, the most common occupational designation for African-American men was "laborer." The census, however, recorded place of work as well, and this documentation

⁴⁴ James D., interview, June 6, 1980, Julia D., interview, June 11, 1980, Mrs. Jimmie S., interview, no date, Dorothy A., interview, no date, Elam F., interview, no date, BMP.

⁴⁵ Geraldine S., interview, June 17, 1980, Joseph W., interview, July 17, 1980, Elva W., interview, July 16, 1980, *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Lelia D., interview, June 20, 1980, *ibid.*

⁴⁷ Julia D., interview, June 11, 1980, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ The number working in factories was 29 out of a total of 119 males listed with occupations: 7 in glass factories, 20 in factories working in wood, and 2 in iron manufactories. *Emerson's Muncie Directory, 1889* (Indianapolis, 1889). The situation in Muncie contrasts with those of Milwaukee in 1880 and in 1900 and Chicago in 1900. In 1880, five occupations (porters, waiters, servants, cooks, and common laborers) made up 69.7 percent of black jobs in Milwaukee; in Muncie, these five occupations represented only 30.3 percent (37 of 122) of jobs held by blacks listed in the city directory. In Milwaukee in 1900, an African-American population twice the size of Muncie's in 1889 included the same number of skilled workers (7), and "few Afro-Americans entered the industrial work force." Trotter, *Black Milwaukee*, 10-13. The proportion of African Americans in Milwaukee was 0.2 percent in 1880 and 0.3 percent in 1900. In Chicago, only 8.3 percent of the black male work force in 1900 held jobs in manufacturing. Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago, 1967), 32.



HOMES IN WHITELY, A RACIALLY INTEGRATED NEIGHBORHOOD
WHERE MANY OF MUNCIE'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN MIGRANTS SETTLED

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Spurgeon-Greene Photo Collection

makes clear that most laborers were industrial workers employed in Muncie's factories.⁴⁹ And while most black men in 1920 held unskilled industrial jobs, a few were able to find semiskilled or skilled work in the factories. The census noted an electrical engineer, a crane operator, gas makers in glass plants, boilermakers, and machinists. Although most women found themselves in domestic service, some also worked in the factories of such companies as Ball Brothers, Hemingray, and the Butterfield Canning Company at a time when few industrial jobs were open to African-American women. Black cooks could find work in factories as well as in private homes. James D. recalled, "You could always get a job in Muncie when you couldn't get a job any place else. Used to be plenty of work here in the factories and the foundaries [*sic*]."⁵⁰

In addition to jobs, African-American migrants found integrated neighborhoods, schools, buses, and streetcars. On the other hand, no white-run restaurants would allow them to eat on the premises, and theaters seated blacks only in the balconies. These two forms of discrimination continued at least into the 1930s. Some parks and swimming pools were closed to blacks. Interviewees reported that African Americans were not hired for the police or

⁴⁹ Of the 114 African Americans whose occupation was listed as "labor" or "laborer," 94 (82 percent) gave a place of work that was clearly an industrial site.

⁵⁰ James D., interview, June 6, 1980, BMP.

sheriff's department or in the courthouse, nor as clerks in stores or waiters in restaurants.⁵¹ Glass workers had organized a union, but it excluded blacks. Clearly Muncie had a long way to go to achieve racial equality, but segregation and discrimination were not as pervasive as in the South at this time.

The evidence from the interviews suggests several hypotheses to explain why black migrants continued to select Muncie while African Americans were leaving similar Indiana cities and why they came even during periods when the Muncie economy slowed. Even in times of slow growth, Muncie continued to enjoy the fruits of the frantic industrialization spurred by the gas boom, as firms such as Ball Brothers and Hemingray remained. Ball Brothers, for example, reduced its need for labor as a result of extensive mechanization beginning in the 1890s, but the company still employed 2,500 workers in 1936.⁵²

With this industrial base, Muncie contributed, along with larger centers in both the North and the South, to the process of proletarianizing the African-American work force, molding a population of mostly agricultural laborers into industrial workers.⁵³ For some migrants who experienced this process, industrial work meant an intensification of work patterns learned in seasonal engagement with the southern industrial economy. From the migrants' perspective, at least equally important was the higher and more regular pay their labor in northern industries could command.

For employers, hiring black workers may have meant hindering unionization by fostering division among their workers—an action employers may have seen as especially necessary in a community that attracted relatively few immigrant workers. Since the jobs black factory workers found were generally the most menial and poorest paid, white employers and co-workers may have been able to maintain racial stereotypes even in the face of black achievement. The ability of northern industrialists to attract blacks to their least desirable factory jobs depended upon the continuation of even worse prospects for African Americans in the South and in the rural and small-town North.

Jobs, however, were not the whole story. In deciding whether and when to leave the South and where to settle in the North, black

⁵¹ Goodall and Mitchell report, however, that Muncie's first black police officer was appointed in 1899, following by two or three years the appointment of the city's first black fire fighter. Furthermore, in 1897 an African American was hired to a clerkship in the city post office. Goodall and Mitchell, *A History of Negroes in Muncie*, 7.

⁵² James H. Madison, *Indiana through Tradition and Change: A History of the Hoosier State and Its People, 1920–1945* (Indianapolis, 1982), 215.

⁵³ For a discussion of proletarianization, see Trotter, *Black Milwaukee*. Muncie appears to depart from William Cohen's generalization that few blacks migrated to the North before World War I because of "an absence of jobs open to blacks." Cohen, *Freedom's Edge*, 96.

migrants probably considered more than merely the availability of jobs.⁵⁴ As they searched for better employment, they looked for improvement in other areas of life: better housing, better schools, equal treatment, and freedom from violence.⁵⁵ This last factor may have been a key to the migration of midwestern rural and small-town black populations to cities beginning in the 1890s. Most of the collective violence directed against blacks in the lower Midwest around the turn of the century occurred in rural areas and small towns.⁵⁶ Blacks generally did not stay in or migrate to such places. In Indiana, towns where lynchings or race riots occurred experienced an average rate of black population growth lower than the average for their size category.⁵⁷ Muncie, however, seems to have been free from antiblack collective violence during this period.⁵⁸ Its relatively tranquil racial atmosphere may have bolstered Muncie's appeal to blacks during its industrial slowdown in the first decade of the century, a time when violence flared in other communities.

Muncie's proportion of black population grew even during the 1920s, when it was a stronghold of the Ku Klux Klan.⁵⁹ Some of the Muncie interviewees recalled witnessing Klan meetings or having personal acquaintance with Klansmen, but none recalled any incidents of Klan-inspired violence against blacks.⁶⁰ "The Klan was active in 1920," reported one. "They used to assemble right down here on Broadway. There was an auditorium there and a rink. They'd

⁵⁴ The inadequacy of a purely economic explanation of migration is noted in Lansing and Mueller, *Geographic Mobility of Labor*, 5-6. Peter Gottlieb points out that the period of mass migration to the North during World War I was also a period of economic expansion in both rural and urban areas in the South. Gottlieb, "Rethinking the Great Migration," 71, 76. Southern blacks' gains in farm ownership and wealth holding during the decade 1900-1910 are described in Neil Fligstein, *Going North: Migration of Blacks and Whites from the South, 1900-1950* (New York, 1981), 83; Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction* (New York, 1992), 429-30. Census Bureau studies of modern migration patterns report that "two-fifths of migrants give noneconomic reasons for migrating." Price and Sikes, *Rural-Urban Migration Research*, 14-15.

⁵⁵ Grossman, *Land of Hope*, 6, 14-19, 35-37.

⁵⁶ See the listings for Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918* (reprint ed., New York, 1969).

⁵⁷ A good example is Evansville, whose African-American population declined both absolutely and proportionally in the aftermath of a race riot in 1903. Darrel E. Bigham, *We Ask Only a Fair Trial: A History of the Black Community of Evansville, Indiana* (Bloomington, 1987), 104-108.

⁵⁸ Goodall and Mitchell record only one violent incident. In 1898 a group of whites threatened to burn a tavern owner's shed if he did not fire his black porter. It is not known if the tavern owner complied. Goodall and Mitchell, *History of Negroes in Muncie*, 6.

⁵⁹ Leonard J. Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana, 1921-1928* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1991), 54, 96.

⁶⁰ Thomas H., interview, no date, Black Muncie Oral History Project (Special Collections, Bracken Library, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana); Dorothy A., interview, no date, Mrs. M., interview, July 1, 8, 1980, Mrs. Geraldine S., interview, June 17, 1980, Elva W., interview, July 16, 1980, BMP.

use the skating rink and things. And they'd use that to meet there. But, the Klan never did anything around here. Had a parade."⁶¹

Other Indiana cities whose black populations grew rapidly after 1890 seem to have shared varying combinations of Muncie's characteristics (see Table 4). Industry was a key variable, as shown by the development of sizeable African-American populations in industrial towns located either in the Gas Belt (Anderson and Marion) or in the rapidly industrializing region near Chicago (Gary and Michigan City).⁶² Although Indiana's black population shifted north within the state after 1890, not all northern Indiana cities gained black citizens, nor did all southern Indiana cities lose them. Some northern communities, such as Kokomo, Richmond, and Logansport, showed rates of black population growth that suggested that in-migration was at best balanced by out-migration. Other places in the North lost black population. In southern Indiana, only Terre Haute seems to have grown through migration. Evansville, meanwhile, demonstrated that the local context within which industrialization occurred was crucial. That city's growing industries offered few jobs for blacks, while heightened racial discrimination and a vicious race riot in 1903 drove blacks from the city.⁶³ Blacks generally moved from smaller places to larger ones, but the size of a town's black community was not a reliable predictor of subsequent black population growth.⁶⁴ The presence of immigrants by itself did not seem to discourage black population growth, as the examples of immigrant-rich Gary and South Bend indicate.⁶⁵ With the exception of Terre Haute, which witnessed a lynching in 1901, places with

⁶¹ Henry S., interview, June 10, 1980, *ibid.* The same interviewee recalled "a kind of a race riot . . . once at the fairgrounds," in an unknown year in response to a question about antiblack violence in Muncie. Emma Lou Thornbrough describes the advance of segregation in some Indiana cities during the 1920s but argues that this development, while motivated by the same racist attitudes that bolstered the Klan, was not produced by Klan activity. Thornbrough, "Segregation in Indiana during the Klan Era."

⁶² The appeal of gas boom towns to rural blacks is noted in Vincent, "African-Americans in the Rural Midwest," 254-55.

⁶³ Bigham, *We Ask Only a Fair Trial*, 58, 103-108.

⁶⁴ Among sixteen Indiana cities with a 1910 population of 10,000 or more and an 1890 black population greater than 10, there was not a statistically significant correlation between the size of the black population in 1890 and the percentage increase of the black population over the subsequent twenty years ($r = -.21$, $p > .05$). The same test produced the same result for the thirty-six towns and cities having a 1910 population of 5,000 or more and an 1890 black population greater than 10 ($r = -.12$, $p > .05$). This contrasts with findings on patterns of black migration to metropolitan areas during the 1950s. Price and Sikes, *Rural-Urban Migration Research*, 183.

⁶⁵ Regression analysis of the eighty-eight Indiana towns with more than 2,500 population in 1910 shows that the black percentage in 1910 was only weakly correlated (negatively) with the percentage of foreign-born whites in the same year: $r = -.20$, $p > .05$. Unfortunately, it is impossible to conduct a statistical test of the effect of large immigrant populations in *industrial* communities, since census data to measure industrialization are not available at the local level.

Table 4
Black Population Changes, 1890–1910,
in Indiana Cities of More Than 10,000 Population in 1910

In Indiana Cities of More Than 10,000 Population in 1910				
	Total Population, 1910	Black Population		Percent Change
		1890	1910	
Indianapolis and North				
100,000+				
Indianapolis	233,650	9,133	21,816	139
25,000–99,999				
Fort Wayne	63,933	217	572	163
South Bend	53,684	280	604	116
10,000–24,999				
Hammond	20,925	7	40	471
Anderson	22,476	206	432	158
Muncie	24,005	418	1,005	140
Marion	19,359	353	836	137
Elkhart	19,282	35	81	131
Michigan City	19,027	133	285	114
Kokomo	17,010	278	388	40
Richmond	22,324	884	1,191	35
Mishawaka	11,886	19	25	32
Logansport	19,050	136	177	30
Lafayette	20,081	304	338	11
Gary	16,802	0	383	n.a.
East Chicago	19,098	0	28	n.a.
Elwood	11,028	0	1	n.a.
Peru	10,910	93	75	-19
Huntington	10,272	16	7	-56
La Porte	10,525	70	30	-57
South of Indianapolis				
25,000–99,999				
Terre Haute	58,157	1,146	2,593	126
Evansville	69,647	5,553	6,266	13
10,000–24,999				
Vincennes	14,895	421	413	-2
Jeffersonville	10,412	1,633	1,535	-6
New Albany	20,629	1,897	1,583	-17

Sources: See Table 2.

rapidly growing black populations lacked recorded incidents of antiblack public violence.⁶⁶

To understand the ebb and flow of black migration to Muncie, it may be helpful to think of migrants' perceptions of Muncie as colored both by characteristics of the Magic City and by the southern and northern backgrounds against which migrants weighed Muncie's qualities. Both Muncie and these backgrounds changed over time. These changes, together with the developments already discussed in this paper, suggest that the growth of Muncie's black population occurred in three distinct stages. During the Civil War and the quarter-century following emancipation, African Americans migrated from the Upper South to Muncie as they did to other small towns and small cities in the Midwest. They found settings similar to the rural worlds they had left behind. During this period, Muncie's appeal to black migrants depended on its similarity to other Indiana small towns.

After 1890, as the tide of migration in the Midwest began to turn toward the region's largest cities, Muncie continued to attract black migrants. Factors contributing to its continuing appeal probably included the countercyclical timing of its industrialization, the paucity of immigrants who could compete for factory jobs, and its relative freedom from antiblack public violence.⁶⁷

Finally, after 1915 African Americans from the Deep South joined a continuing stream of migrants from the Upper South to fill the jobs created by a booming industrial economy. By this time, a black community had formed in Muncie of sufficient size to support migration chains that allowed the Magic City to share in the fruits of the first Great Migration.⁶⁸ Having set itself apart from the pattern of black out-migration that characterized other midwestern small towns at the turn of the century, Muncie was able to remain an attractive destination for African-American migrants.

The view from Muncie provides a useful perspective on some important issues surrounding black migration. Migration to Muncie between the Civil War and the Great Depression was not a headlong flight from heightened segregation and violence in the South, but rather a long-term process resting upon a succession of

⁶⁶ Marion had witnessed an attempted lynching in 1885 and was the scene of Indiana's last lynching in 1930, but between 1890 and 1910 its black population grew nearly as rapidly as that of Muncie. *Marion Chronicle*, July 17, 24, 1885.

⁶⁷ Kenneth Kusmer argues that a decline in black opportunity throughout the North during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was retarded in medium-sized midwestern cities, "chiefly because they contained fewer immigrants to compete for . . . jobs [in the skilled trades]." Kenneth Kusmer, *A Ghetto Takes Shape: Black Cleveland, 1870-1930* (Urbana, Ill., 1976), 75.

⁶⁸ Daniel Johnson and Rex Campbell point to the possible function of late nineteenth-century migration streams in "developing pathways and linkages that served as mechanisms for facilitating and even encouraging later movements." Johnson and Campbell, *Black Migration in America*, 68.

historical changes affecting Muncie, the places where migrants originated, and the other destinations to which they might have traveled. Nor was it a blind rush to any place where a railroad might deposit southerners heading north. Northern-born migrants relied upon prior experience of northern conditions, and migrants from both North and South depended upon information gathered from family and friends about potential destinations. Foreknowledge was necessary because northern towns and cities presented to the migrant not a uniform field of opportunity but a patchwork of jobs varying in quantity and quality, black communities differing in size and readiness to welcome newcomers, and race relations of varying temperatures.⁶⁹ And, like a turned kaleidoscope, the pattern changed with time. That blacks continued to migrate to Muncie and certain other Indiana small cities after the tide of African-American migration began to flow strongly toward bigger cities not only testifies to the variety of choices facing migrants but implies diversity among those making the choices.

⁶⁹ Kusmer, "Black Urban Experience"; Gottlieb, "Rethinking the Great Migration."